

THE KISS OF GLORY



BY GRACE
DVFFIE BOYLAN

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WHAT IS SAID OF "THE KISS OF GLORY"

In many ways "The Kiss of Glory" is a remarkable book. It has fancy, blood, and passion in it, and in comparison with the recent crop of domestic fiction it is like some strange, brilliant, tropical bird that has fluttered down among a lot of barnyard fowls. On every page we catch the clash of spears, the whiff of strange perfumes, and glimpse the dusky beauty of half-veiled Egyptian women.—*New York Journal*.

The story unfolds rapidly and progresses straight toward its dramatic conclusion. Its characters are men and women whom we can recognize as beings like ourselves.—*New York Mail and Express*.

This is Grace Duffie Boylan's first novel, and, to be plain, it is a cracking good one.—*Rochester, N. Y., Herald*.

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A beautiful and wholesome story.—*Boston Times*.

A good story well told.—*Albany Journal*.

One of the greatest stories in all literature, wholly human in the elemental passions exhibited. It is a powerful portrayal. Mrs. Boylan has been fortunate in imagining a passion in entire keeping with the oriental surroundings which give the book as a whole its fine exotic flavor.—*Chicago American*.

"The Kiss of Glory" is an idyl. Full of tender speeches and poetic sentiments. As a romance of love it is without a blemish.—*Denver Republican*.

"The Kiss of Glory" is unquestionably one of the greatest works of fiction of our times.—*Saratoga Springs Herald*.

The work is a masterpiece. The theme is as fascinating as it is audacious, and when the triumphal climax is reached the reader is divided between two sensations: regret that the story must end and admiration for Mrs. Boylan's superb gift.—*Albany Times-Union*.

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G. W. DILLINGHAM COMPANY,
Publishers, New York

The Kiss of Glory

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By

Grace Duffie Boylan



Illustrations and Cover by

J. C. Leyendecker

G. W. DILLINGHAM COMPANY

Publishers

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The Kiss of Glory.

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T^o *MALCOLM*

FOREWORD

*A*MONG the scarabei in the Metropolitan Museum in New York is one which bears upon its back this ancient writing:

"This scarab was placed in the mummy of the king's scribe, Nesh Ptah, son of Khonsu Maut. It contains the Chapter of the Heart from the Book of the Dead."

The king's scribe is a fleck of dust. His records of defeats and victories, his battle songs and verses to the queen, and all the nice accountings of his clerkly hand have passed away. Only the Chapter of the Heart remains. For love is there; and love is the one thing that does not die.

This story is the Chapter of the Heart of Joseph, the son of Jacob: the heart of the boy, filled with visions of the fields; and the heart of the man, filled with stormy dreams of one fair woman.

So, if I tell the tale but simply at the start, and dwell on little joys and timid loves awhile, it is because this untaught shepherd has long ways to go before he reaches Egypt and his Hour of Understanding.

GRACE DUFFIE BOYLAN

The People of the Story

JOSEPH, *a mighty archer, also known as Dath and Zaph-nath Paaneah.*

ASENATH, *the loveliest maid in all Egypt and daughter of*

THE HIGH PRIEST OF HELIOPOLIS.

POTIPHAR, *captain of the king's troops. A man to whom the pipes of war are sweeter than the songs of women.*

ZEREL, *the wife of Potiphar. A lonely woman, by the world misjudged.*

APEPI, *the last of the shepherd kings and the first great grain speculator.*

TAIA, *his queen, who schemes, like any other mother, for her son's happiness.*

MENTU, *the crown prince of Egypt. A youth with a talent for falling in love.*

AMAN, *an Arab chief and head of the caravan trade from Damascus to the Nile.*

LAYAH, *his wife. The mother of the pearl of the desert.*

THE PEOPLE OF THE STORY—Continued

LOUIMMA, *a girl whose heart beats with the hoof music of horses.*

ESAU, *Joseph's uncle, prince of Edom.*

RHODA, *his granddaughter, a red-haired beauty who captures her capturer.*

MIRZAH, ELMA, *companions of Rhoda.*

ORPAH, TASU, *attendants on the lady Asenath.*

JUBAL, *an innkeeper, with a novel fashion of recording his guests.*

ZENOCK, *a slave of Aman.*

OMAR, *a potter of Edom.*

NECO, *an Egyptian dwarf and jester with a taste for conundrums.*

THAH-OF-THE-OVENS, *the king's baker.*

REUEL, *a gentleman of Esau's court.*

REUBEN, JUDAH, LEVI, NAPHTALI, SIMEON, DAN, GAD,
ASHER, BENJAMIN, *brothers of Joseph.*

Soldiers, archers, hunters, merchants, horse traders, acrobats, athletes, dancing girls, singing children, men and women riders, Ishmaelites, pygmies, priests, maidens of the temple, pleasure seekers, heralds, and slaves.

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THE KISS OF GLORY

CHAPTER I

A Race and a Wager

DAN sat with his back to the fountain, and stretched his arms, full length, along the basin's rim. Behind him the waters, fed by a subterranean spring, rose to a height of fifteen feet and waved a plume of spray in the air. Occasionally, when a breeze disturbed and scattered it, some shining drops fell over the boy. But he shook them from his bare shoulders and black locks as one of his own sheep might have done, and kept his interested gaze on the movements of two other lads who were marking a racecourse between the point where the plain began to rise toward the hills and the stone which

guarded the entrance to the large cistern—a pool of considerable depth next to the fountain and probably the first reservoir of the underground stream.

The lads had chosen a level stretch of land half a mile in length, and although it was covered with grass, the sheep, now grazing in sight but farther toward the mountains, had clipped it close as a carpet and left nothing to impede the bare feet of the runners—if, indeed, the slight spring imparted to them by the verdure did not increase their speed. As they came running back to the starting point, Dan sprang to his feet and called:

“My best lamb to the winner.”

And the two threw off their upper garments and stood side by side, with slender limbs trembling and chests heaving, waiting only the signal to begin. Dan saw that they were already tired with their labors and went toward them.

“Rest here until the others come,” he said; “and I will mark a line with this red stone, that you may start evenly.”

“Reuben wanted to see the race,” said the younger of the runners, “and he promised a prize.”

“I saw him carving a polished ram’s horn and setting it with bright-colored stones,” exclaimed the other boy. “Perhaps it will be that!”

There was a shepherd’s horn on the wall of the fountain, and Dan pointed to it.

“Call our brothers,” he said. “It would be a pity to have a mighty race and no one here to see it. But wait”—he took the horn from the lad just as he was raising it to his lips—“an athlete does not win a race by trumpet blowing. He keeps his breath in his lungs that it may help his legs. Now!”

He lifted the instrument and blew its harsh call vigorously, and in a moment answering notes came back across the plain.

“They will come,” he laughed, “and the sheep must take care of themselves until we find out who is the fleetest runner in Canaan. And if they wander away, he can prove his swiftness by running after and bringing them

back while the rest of us tell tales here by the fountain."

The young contestants were not quite satisfied with the logic; but they knew Dan was ever a jester, and so they looked at each other with smiles.

"Here come your witnesses," he continued. "Now, spring to your places and put your great toes across the line. The end of one must not extend a hair's breadth beyond the other or I shall have to trim off the difference with my shears."

He spoke with assumed roughness, but the boys laughed as they set their nimble brown feet as he directed, and waited, alert and ready, for the arrival of the shepherds, who were drawing near from the different quarters of the plain. Swarthy men and youths, some dressed in rudely-constructed garments of fur and others clothed in short tunics of camel's hair; but all fierce and eager of eye, and apparently ready to welcome any diversion from the monotony of their occupation.

The boys who were waiting to prove their

mettle were lithe and slender; deep of chest and fine of limb as the Arabian horses that lived in the black tents with them at home, and as vigorous as the sapling palms at the edge of their familiar desert. Their dark hair hung to their shoulders and their childish, but spirited, features were lighted by flashing black eyes, and the color, brilliantly red, which flamed in their cheeks. They were much alike in face and form, and well suited for a contest of endurance and strength such as they were about to engage in.

"We waited your coming," said Dan to the new arrivals; "but now all is ready."

"One!"

The slender limbs of the boys steadied; each drew in a great breath that lifted his chest like a dome.

"Two!"

The lithe, brown forms squatted and, chin forward, chest arched, and with the finger tips of each hand pressed on the line at either side, each waited the final:

"Three!"

Then, by a sudden lifting to their toes, they made a spring which landed them well on their course and set them running with its impetus toward the goal. The older shepherds stood in a little group, following with their eyes the flying figures. Dan and the others near his age gave vent to their enthusiasm in loud cries of encouragement.

“Asher! Asher!”

“Gad! Gad!”

“A ram’s horn trimmed with silver to the winner!”

“The best lamb of the flock for the one who gains the goal!”

Asher looked back, confused by the shouting, and missed a step. For a moment he wavered dizzily, and Gad shot on like an arrow from its bow. The watchers took sides and shouted mingled cheers and jeers after the runners, who were now a quarter of the way down the course with Gad steadily gaining.

“On, little brother!”

“Haste, haste, O stumbler!” were the principal cries.

Dan mounted the edge of the cistern.

"My flock's lord on Asher!" he cried.
"My flock's lord against any other!"

But the boy was still behind Gad, and the goal was nearer. Judah said, smilingly:

"If you would part with the sheep, give it to the lad who loses. It will soothe his grief."

But Dan was determined to make the wager.

"Asher, Asher!" he called wildly. "My whole flock on Asher!" A shout of derision answered him. But Judah's glance suddenly kindled.

"It is a foolish wager," he said; "but I shall profit by it. Mine against yours that Gad keeps the advantage. See, Asher limps and drags his foot wearily, and Gad has slowed his pace but still keeps ahead."

It was so. As they entered the last quarter of the course the boy who had stumbled seemed scarcely able to run at all, and the other slackened his speed and ran but a yard or so in advance of him until near the end. Then those who waited saw 'Asher's body,

straighten and fairly leap in the air; his limbs lose their lameness and move as though winged, while the distance between the two runners closed but to open again, with the positions reversed and Gad in the rear. He had heard the oncoming of the suddenly swift feet, but before he could realize the trick which had been played upon him, Asher had passed him and had leaped full upon the stone which marked the final post.

From their distance the shepherds saw the ruse, and greeted it with cheers and laughter. And as the boys came running back they ran out to meet them half way and carry them to the fountain on their shoulders. All but Judah, who stood where he was and gazed after them moodily. But his brow cleared as they approached, and he caught Gad in his arms, and then, stripping him of his tunic, plunged him in the pool, where he swung him back and forth like the bronze pendulum of a tall clock, and threatened to duck him for losing the race and his wager. Reuben performed a similar service for the other lad, and

then the two were laid prone on the brick coping of the cistern and rubbed with coarse cloth until their blood tingled under the polished, ruddy skin and every muscle had the resistance of iron.

Dan's gaming fever had ended with the contest, and he went over and stood beside Judah.

"I will not take the flock, brother," he said. "One leads me too far, and I have no fancy for looking after another. But was not the lad wary? Father will laugh when we take the news back to the tents."

Judah frowned until his black brows met, and answered gruffly:

"You will take the flock. It is yours. Had I won the foolish bet, I should have taken every hoof and fleece and horn from your fold. I am a just man, and as I take I yield."

Dan, who was young and generous and merry, tried to persuade him, but without success; so he walked away, and was soon wrestling with Naphtali and trying games of strength and agility with a number of the

others, two of whom sat down on the ground, back to back, and, passing the elbows of the opposite arms, the right of one within the left of the other, endeavored to rise without touching the earth with the disengaged hand. As one would try to rise the other would keep him down, and time after time they rolled over on the sands together. The feat is a difficult one, and it was only after repeated trials that Simeon struggled into an upright position and received the cheers of the spectators.

Dan, who had sent one of his herdsmen for the lamb, now called Asher up to receive it. It was a pretty creature, milk white and gentle, and around its neck tinkled a string of bells, made out of beaten gold and having slender tongues of jasper. The tones produced by these lily-shaped instruments were soft and musical in the extreme; and as the lamb nestled in the arms of its new master every movement was accompanied with melody. Reuben brought his promised prize after the lamb had been presented. It was

as the boys had anticipated, a ram's horn. But it was one of peculiar shape, ornately carved and decorated with blue and scarlet stones and inlaid with ivory and silver. Asher put it to his lips and blew a blast so ringing and clear that the little hills sent back their answering echoes.

"A brave old ram once wore it," said Reuben, as they all sat down on the ground below Judah, who still kept his elevated place on the coping of the well. "One night in the valley of Shechem the wolves crept into the fold, and would have destroyed the whole flock had not this warrior made battle. He died, it is true, but he delayed the feast until I and my herders reached the scene and drove off the pack with our fires. I have the other part of his crown still, and I shall polish and trim it and give it a sweet sound for the next winner of a race.

He glanced at Gad, smilingly; but just then Judah's voice fell upon them.

"Look," he said; "here comes the Dreamer."

CHAPTER II

The Dreamer

A DEEP silence fell upon the little company, and every eye was turned in the direction of the low hill to the south, from the summit of which a boy was descending with long leaps and every appearance of eager haste. He was apparently about the age of the two who had contested in the foot race; but he was fair of skin and his hair glistened in the light which also brought out the rich colors and threads of gold and silver of the embroidery which edged his tunic.

The faces of the watchers, before animated by good-will and the spirit of the games, became sullen and lowering. Even Dan's merry features grew morose, and he called to Asher, who still cuddled his lamb in his arms:

“Hide your pet or yonder prince may claim it as a tribute when he deigns to visit us.”

“Yes,” said Naphtali, “and the ram's horn,

too. He will need a trumpet to proclaim how our father has set him up above the rest of us."

"Why are we sitting here at our ease while he is approaching?" said Simeon. "We must be ready to bow at his feet."

Their tones were becoming more angry with every word uttered; and under their black brows their eyes flashed hate. Reuben, who had taken no part in the mutterings, now interposed.

"The boy has done no harm," he said. "I am the oldest, and if he has taken any one's place, it is mine; but I have no anger against him. Let us leave him alone."

"He is a tale-bearer," said Levi, "and all our quarrelings get to father's ears through him. More than that, while we sleep on the ground he dreams on silken cushions that he is a star to whom eleven meaner stars give their homage; and that around his sheaf of wheat in the harvest field eleven others prostrate themselves. A-ah!"

A deep and angry murmur answered this speech, and Levi continued:

“We can read his dreams for him and see that he has no more. Look, he comes in his jewelled coat that shows his lordship over us. If we let him go back, he will carry more news of us to our father, who will take away all we have.”

The brothers were now roused to rage, and Reuben had only time to speak sternly to them when Joseph bounded joyfully up and stood before them.

“Oh, Reuben, Judah, Levi, all, I am so glad that I have found you!” he cried. “Father sent me to see if you were well, and I have had a merry search. I hunted every pasture in Shechem and then a man told me he had seen some noble shepherds driving their flocks northward, and I started after. Though little did I think that you had come so far. I ran up the little hills but to run down them again, and seemed to get no farther on my way. A merchant returning from the city with an unladen camel let me ride, but I was ever a poor sailor on the desert ship. With every stride the great beast made I lurched

and reeled, until— What is it, brothers? Have you had some accident? You look at me so strangely. Are you ill?”

The boy had stopped in the midst of his speech to gaze, astonished, into the scowling faces before him. Something he saw there made him step back a few paces and press his hand to his heart. Judah stepped down from the coping and walked toward him.

“You need not have taken so long a journey for us, Your Mightiness!” he said.

Joseph heard the sneer in his tones without understanding it.

“I—I—” he begun, and stopped, for Levi’s fierce hand was upon him.

“We want nothing from you, great prince, but this:” He seized the gorgeous garment in his grasp, and with one strong pull ripped the seams and tore it from his shoulder.

Joseph gave a cry and wrenched his arm from the cruel fingers. Then his eyes swept the grim faces around him for a gleam of pity. Swept them once and again, and returned to rest on Reuben’s. Then he straightened his

young shoulders and stood before them pale, but brave and indignant.

“I see that you mean harm to me,” he said; “and I am only a boy against you all. But I am not a coward. I can die if I must. Which one of you will take the news to my father, who waits in the door of his tent for me now?”

“Hear the braggart! His father!” cried Naphtali. “Is he not ours also?”

“Yes, and he loves you. Would he have sent me, else, to inquire if you needed anything, or were in danger of the wild beasts, or had met misfortune with the flocks? Is it my fault that I am Rachel’s son and that he sees her face in mine and loves her in me?”

Joseph’s voice trembled as he spoke of his dead mother. But the shepherds had gone too far in their rage to be moved to any compassion. His reference to Rachel only filled their hearts with more resentment. Judah, with a sudden flaming of his temper, caught him roughly by the arms and bound his hands behind him with a short thong of sheepskin.

But when Levi drew his knife from his girdle and sprang upon him, it was Judah who held him back.

“We will not kill him,” he said. “For, after all, the lad is our brother. We will leave him here in one of these caverns in the rock. A kid fell in one but this morning and was killed. I went down after it on a ladder of ox hide and found the well shaped like a bottle—broad at the base and narrow at the top, with sides as smooth as the face of Cheops. We will leave him there; he will be long in returning.”

Reuben, who had been standing close at hand, now spoke eagerly:

“The thought is a good one. I, myself, will put him in the pit.”

He unwound a rope of braided camel’s hair from his waist and put one end about the boy’s shoulders and another around his knees. Then, as he caught the reproachful wonder in Joseph’s eyes, he bent over to whisper:

“This is to save you, boy. When they are gone, then will I return and lift you out.”

And as he tied the ropes he loosened the thongs that bound Joseph's hands together. "Come," he said, aloud and roughly. And with tremendous strength swung the slender figure to his shoulders.

Levi leaped forward. There was in his movements the lightness and ferocity of a panther.

"Give the ropes to me," he urged. "I can drop a star into a well and the heavens will not know that one is missing."

Reuben felt the quiver of the burden on his shoulders, but he answered lightly:

"I have the ends around my wrists, and will fling him to the bottom like a minnow."

And he strode hurriedly over the plain to the place that Judah had pointed out.

The cave, which was simply a rock-hewn cistern now dry for the lack of rain, had a circular opening about three feet in diameter, around which the men were gathered when Reuben arrived. The latter lifted Joseph from his shoulders and saw with relief that he had fainted. So, with a great show of careless

haste—but in reality with the utmost caution and gentleness—he lowered his unconscious charge into the pit and returned with the others to the fountain.

The embroidered tunic which Jacob had so unwisely given to Joseph lay in a heap on the ground, where it had fallen when Levi had torn it from him. Its bright jewels glistened in the sunlight, and Judah picked it up thoughtfully. Something stirred in his heart at the sight of it that was not all envy or hate. He glanced at his brothers. There were no smiles of innocent gayety on their faces now. Their features were pale with fear.

Reuben sat apart from the others, and now and then he turned a listening look in the direction of the cave. Asher and Gad had wandered away, oppressed and troubled by the scene they had witnessed, but now the latter came running and calling loudly:

“My lamb has gone down into the ravine and I cannot find it.” And Reuben started up and ran toward them with all possible speed. As he met them, they tried to explain how the little creature had slipped away.

“I knew he wanted to try his little legs,” said Gad, with the sympathy of a runner, “and so I told Asher to let him down.”

“Yes,” said the latter, “and he had rested in my arms, nestling as though he liked it. But as soon as I put him on the ground he was off and away like the wind, with all those little bells laughing.”

“We followed the sound for a while,” added Gad; “but after it had led us away down between the hills it suddenly stopped, and although we have looked all around we cannot find the lamb.”

Reuben put his hand to his mouth and imitated the call of the ewe.

Then they listened. But no little wanderer made answer.

They ran down the steep declivity of the hill that shut them off from the group around the fountain and leaped from rock to rock in their search for the straying. Now and then their trained ears caught the far-off tinkle of the golden bells, and then they would stop long enough to send an entreating “Ba-a-a”

in the direction of the sound. But it was not until they had almost given up the hunt that a cheerful "Ma-a-a" sounded from below them, and they looked down to see the lamb lying contentedly on a green and flowery bank, resting after its mischievous scamper. When Asher took it up in his arms again, however, it submitted like a philosopher, and soon laid a repentant head on his shoulder.

When the three returned, the Land of Tum, as the Arabs called the west at sunset, was red with the glory of the departing day. Toward the north the sky was palely violet and set with one strange, brilliant, silver star.

As they approached the fountain, they saw that the shepherds were still beside it, but moving in excited groups and talking with many gestures. Reuben's face paled as he looked at them, and he said to the boys:

"Run on ahead and tell our brothers what a chase the lamb led us. I will join you at the fountain, and then we will make ready to go into camp where the flocks are grazing on the other side of the valley."

The two ran onward as he had directed. And, with a sickening dread at his heart, Reuben struck off toward the bottle-shaped cistern. He intended to release Joseph when the camp had been pitched at a distance for the night. For, although the greatest sufferer because of the favor his father had transferred to the younger son, Reuben loved the boy and wished to restore him safely to the old man at Hebron. He pictured to himself the awful sorrow of Jacob if any ill came to Joseph, and as the sudden fear that something had occurred in his absence came to him, he broke into a swift run, which brought him in a few moments to the place. Once there, he knelt and bent over the grassy rim.

“Joseph,” he called softly. “Joseph.”

There was no answer.

“Joseph,” he cried again, a note of his anxiety in his tone, “be not afraid. It is I, Reuben.”

He leaned over, peering through the darkness, for the swift Orient night was almost upon him, and tried to discern the boy's figure.

“Be not afraid, little brother; it is I, Reuben.”

Still no reply.

And now, with eyes somewhat accustomed to the gloom, he leaned still farther into the cave. The rock walls glistened around as he peered to the uttermost sides. Then he sprang up with a cry.

Joseph was gone!

CHAPTER III

Caravans of Araby

DOTHAN is on the caravan road from Damascus to Egypt; and its two wells supplied the water-skins of travellers, who, coming from the far East, had yet to cross a tawny triangle of Philistia before they reached the Nile.

After Reuben and the younger boys had gone away in search of the lamb, Judah, who had been sitting with his head bent over on his breast, heard Dan spring to his feet with an exclamation, and looked up to see a number of camels winding out of the narrow ravine which led through steep walls of rock from the Arabian plateau to the plains of rich pasture within the amphitheatre of the hills.

For a time a cloud of dust raised by the padded feet of the animals partially obscured them; but as they drew nearer their brilliant trappings and the white turbans of the men who rode high on the laden packs, proved the

cavalcade to be Bedouin traders, dealing not only in spices and various balms and perfumery, but in cloths of gold and silver and matchless silks woven in the countless looms of Arabia and colored by means of murex shells in Tyre.

As they came within hailing distance the shepherds shouted greetings, which were answered by the Arabs lifting both hands to their foreheads with finger tips touching finger tips. And the brothers hospitably ran out to grasp the camels by their mouth-straps and lead them to the cistern. Then, as the beasts knelt and thrust their long necks over the low coping to reach the water, the men dismounted and straightened their cramped limbs with every evidence of relief. While Nubian slaves, who had now arrived on camels laden with folded tents and supplies for the bivouac, made haste to remove the flowing red and yellow garments of their masters and, thus denuded, sponge them with the refreshing waters from the fountain. They were majestic figures as they stood there. Tall and lithe,

with the muscles showing hard and firm in their limbs; but their faces were fierce and keen, and betrayed little pleasure in the meeting with the shepherds, who had retired to a distance, waiting for the travellers to advance with the customary introductions.

At last, when their robes were replaced and they had consulted briefly among themselves, their leader walked toward the brothers.

"We are sons of Ishmael," he said, "and our camels' packs are filled with merchandise for Egypt."

Judah bent forward in salutation.

"The sons of Jacob give you greeting," he answered, "and pray to add to that refreshment."

But the chief responded haughtily:

"Neither greeting or refreshment will the desert wanderers take from you or your father. If you have anything you wish to sell or barter we will take it, and cheat you if we can. Come, you have warning. Now, have you ivory for the king's pillars or slaves for his household?"

He spoke mockingly, and Judah was about to answer him in the same strain, when the last sentence caught his attention. The thought of leaving Joseph to the wild beasts had become intolerable to him, and he grasped at a more merciful idea eagerly. So, without heeding the insolent looks of the traders, he turned to his brothers.

“Let us sell the boy,” he cried sharply, with the manner of one who suddenly finds a way out of a direful situation; and the others agreed immediately, with the exception of Levi.

“How do we know that he will not escape and return?” he asked moodily, and with suspicious glances toward his brothers. “What should we have then to say to our father?”

But Dan interposed harshly: “I will not leave him here for the panthers. Sell him to these men and I will hold my peace. But if any greater harm befalls him, I will go to our father myself and say: The murderers of Rachel’s son are come to claim your blessing.”

Dan spoke with passion and threw out both

arms with a gesture of contempt and loathing for himself and the others, and then walked toward the group of merchantmen, who had turned away indifferently and were now eating their evening meal of dried meat and candied fruit and drinking from curious cups of beaten silver a liquor made from the fermented sap of the cactus plant.

Dan waited until they had finished their repast and the water-bowls had been passed by the slaves for the cleansing of their beards and hands, then he approached the leader.

“If you bought a slave would he be harshly dealt with?” he asked.

The Ishmaelite shrugged his shoulders, but made no reply, for just then Judah and Levi came up with Joseph between them, and the traders’ practised eyes were surveying the young figure with interest. And the lad made no complaint as the man sharply ordered him to bend his arm that he might feel the muscles rise under the tender flesh.

When he had come out of his faint, he had lain for a while sobbing with terror in the dark

cavern. He knew the temper of the wild, rough men, and had little hope of mercy from any of them. Yet Reuben's manner had been reassuring, and, remembering it, the boy regained his courage and waited his fate without a cry that might reach his brothers beside the fountain. Slowly the hours dragged along, and at last he looked up to see Levi's cruel face bending over him. His heart gave a throb of alarm, but he controlled himself, and obeyed the sharp commands to take the ropes and allow himself to be lifted to the surface of the ground. Judah's presence convinced him that there would be no dropping of the lines this time, and when they had at last drawn him up into the warm outer air he stood before them quietly, ready to meet death without a cry. But when he saw the traders, and gathered from a few hurried words from Judah that he was to be saved from the panthers only to be sold as a slave, his heart failed, and he looked wildly around for Reuben. The eldest brother was chasing the lamb through the farther ravine at that

time, and Joseph finding him absent knew that his fate was sealed. He was only a boy, and he cried in shame and agony as he saw the leader count out the silver into Levi's palm and then motion to the Nubians to take him away. But he looked back toward the brothers as he went to the waiting camels.

"Remember my dreams," he cried, a brave taunt in his ringing voice. "Around my sheaf eleven others bowed, and my star was lord of the sky. I shall not always be a slave."

The Nubians threw him on the camel's back and bound him to the high pommel of the saddle, harshly bidding him keep silence. The great beast rose to its fore knees, swinging him backward; and then to its rear quarters suddenly, throwing him abruptly in the opposite direction; another violent movement restored the camel to its fore feet, where it waited the hoarse signal to start. The traders had all mounted. Seizing their beasts by the manes and throwing their right legs over the saddles with incredible quickness and agility,

and retaining a firm hold on the forward elevation during the rising process. Joseph, being bound and unable to steady himself, felt a spasm of nausea, and he closed his eyes and sat silent while the caravan moved away from the wells and out into the main highway southward.

The brothers stood watching while the little band rode rapidly away; no one spoke a word until the hills had hidden the travellers from sight. Then Judah again took up the little jewelled coat and walked away with it toward the other side of the valley. Dan rose, shaking his mantle from his shoulders and letting it fall on the sand.

"Who's for a foot race?" he cried. But no one made a motion to join him.

"Come, Naphtali," he cried, in nervous insistence, "I wager we can start here with our toes on the line I made for the little runners this morning and I will reach the flock across the valley as far ahead of you as that palm's plume is high above the ground."

Naphtali sprang up beside him.

“Then we must start now,” he said, good-naturedly, “or your strength will all be spent in boasting.”

They took their places, and the low sun stretched their distorted shadows before them on the grass. Then Naphtali turned back to say to the others:

“Make your bets as you will, but I shall not only reach the fold first, but I shall leap over, without touching, the first group of six grown sheep that I find side by side.”

“And if he does not find six standing as he wishes, he will still be known all through the land of Canaan as the man who could have made a mighty jump had he but tried.” Dan fastened the thong of his sandal while he spoke, and Naphtali joined in the laughter which greeted the sally. But as they were about to make ready for the start they saw the boys, Gad and Asher, running up with the lamb, and Judah coming swiftly toward them with something in his hands, which he held away from his sight as though in strong aver-

sion. Wondering they looked. And as he came nearer they saw the coat of many colors had been changed into one hue, and that was crimson. They pressed toward him, and he said:

“There must be something to show to Jacob when we go back to him at Hebron. Levi’s fingers tore this as fiercely as a panther’s claws would have done, and I have dipped it in blood—no more innocent than the boy’s—from a lamb of my flock. It is all we need to make our father think the lad is dead.”

He spread the garment out before them. Its rubies shone but dully against the brighter crimson of the stains. Then they lifted pale faces to see Reuben running toward them from the field.

His face, usually so gravely kind, was white with a great rage, and he flung himself upon them furiously.

“Joseph!” he cried, his voice hoarse with agony. “Where is Joseph? Give him to me, or as I live your lives shall pay for his.”

For a moment there was silence, save for the deep breathing of the brothers as they cowered like sheep in an awakened lion's path. Then Reuben's glance fell on the coat in Judah's hands.

CHAPTER IV

A Song and a Choice

A SOUND came out of an orchard of palms.

“What is that?” asked Joseph of the Nubian whose camel strode beside his own so closely that their padded feet fell in perfect unison on the white sand of the highway. The black face under the huge striped turban was neither harsh nor kind, but the slave answered:

“A sound like that may be the wind among the trees. It may be the bulbul in the Valley of Roses.”

The boy had looked at the impassive profile of his guard and found little to reassure or comfort him; but as he spoke there was a note in his voice which ran down to Joseph's heart and called up a little laugh. It was on his lips when he answered:

“I will warrant it is neither the wind nor the nightingale. There must be an encampment

somewhere about here, for I am certain I heard——”

“You heard Louimma, the daughter of Aman, the Ishmaelite, singing.”

Joseph made no answer, and the other continued:

“Aman likes not to be hindered by the household when he is on business, and as he goes now for a season’s stay in Egypt he sent the women with their slaves a day’s journey ahead of the caravan. They wait him here at the springs, and yonder torches show the camp.” He paused a moment, and then continued:

“The sons of the fugitive Hagar have little love for the other children of Abraham, but our chief is a just man, and once in his tents you will be treated kindly.”

Joseph had been dazed by his sudden and unexpected situation, but he was gallant of spirit and too much of a boy to be altogether dismayed. Still he was glad of the friendliness conveyed by the tone of the Nubian, and he looked at him gratefully; for he had antici-

pated cruel treatment and was reminded that the Arab law of hospitality extended even to those who had been bought for slaves as long as they were detained, perforce, within the woven walls. His heart grew lighter at the thought, and he lifted his head with new courage and peered into the purple night for a glimpse of the torches. Two gleamed, no larger than fireflies, far back from the road among the slender columns of the palms. And through the star-lit colonnade between, where tawny tigers sometimes stalked by day, came ever sweeter and more clear a young girl's song.

The grotesque shapes of the camels with their riders, formerly blurred somewhat by the distance, loomed larger before his eyes as they slowed their pace. He heard the sharp "Ai-i" of the men who led the way, and soon the entire company turned into the grove and toward the now visible tents.

While softly clear above the rasping chirr of insects and the heavy breathing of the camels the words of the song floated out to them as though on light and shining wings:

“My steed, my steed, with eyes of love and
nostrils lined with fire,
I sing thy praise, my beautiful, and sound
my singing lyre.
Thy neck is like the crescent moon, thy
mane is like the mist,
And whitely shines above thy brow a star
that I have kissed.”

The Nubian made a comprehensive gesture.

“The daughter of Aman loves a horse,” he said; and Joseph’s heart leaped and grew light, for he knew that between him and the ones who held his fate in their power there was at least one bond of sympathy. He, too, loved a horse, and he thought with a rush of quick tears of his own Arabian that was, perhaps, even then whinnying for him at the tent curtains at Hebron. Still came the song:

“Thy speed is swifter than the Wind’s, upon
the hills of Day.
No sterner rein than ribbons light upon thy
neck I lay.
And O, thy feet that, like the rain, subdue
the desert sand.
And O, thy strength that laughs at strength
and minds a maiden’s hand.”

There was a sudden humming twang of a broken string and a burst of laughter, and a higher, shriller voice exclaiming:

“Run, Louimma, little one, and welcome your father.”

Then an upright wedge of light showed where the curtains had been drawn aside hurriedly; and in this triangle, with the gorgeous interior of the tent for a background, stood a girl with her face turned with a waiting look toward the purple darkness.

The camels sank to their knees and crouched until their huge bodies pressed the ground, and in a moment the Arab chief had dismounted and hurried to his daughter, clasping her in his arms.

Joseph saw her lay a little hand on either side of the dark face and heard her question with playful sternness:

“Did you bring all I bade you from the bazaars, you tardy one? Hanna has been chewing rose leaves all day for want of gum from the lentisk tree, and mother desires spices for the dish of grapes she made with

her own hands for a certain hungry traveller. And did you remember the jasper-tipped spear, and the stuff for the white camel's trappings——"

The Arab shook back his head and laughed.

"Have done with your questions and let me in. I will tell you there."

But she held the position, barring with two round arms the whole entrance.

"That will I not," she said stoutly, "until you tell me. For if you have forgotten, or like a bad father did not obey all my commands, back you must go to Damascus."

He caught her in his arms and, with her laughter running like a chime of little bells over his deeper-toned merriment, carried her in, and the curtains fell behind them.

By this time a number of slaves had come up carrying torches, which they struck into the ground here and there, and then set about unloading the camels of tent equipments. A space not far distant from the main tent occupied by Aman's family had been prepared for the merchantmen who accompanied him on

the present enterprise, and lofty young cypresses had been shorn of their plumes and made ready to support the canvas roof.

Joseph's camel had knelt with the others and settled slowly into a palpitating heap on the earth. But, as his passenger did not dismount, he sent an inquiring glance backward, and then gave a mighty shiver that would certainly have dislodged the boy had he not been bound on. Twice and again this effort was repeated, and then, with a sigh of resignation, the animal subsided into sleep with his long neck and ugly head stretched flat along the sand. The Nubian had been occupied unloading the packs and carrying them into the small tents which adjoined Aman's pavilion. It was still early evening, for they had travelled southward from Dothan, less than ten miles, and the moon was just beginning to light the orchard. Under the swift and experienced hands of the slaves the merchant's tent rose as by magic, and stood a black patch in the silver radiance. Then the flaps were held back by the aid of two tall javelins while

the furnishing went on. Skins, soft and brilliant in texture and hue, were taken from the seemingly inexhaustible packs and laid on the pounded earthen floor. The walls, coarsely woven of camel's hair, were hung with curtains, and couches were made of pillows heaped on the carpet. From notches cut at intervals in the cypress columns torches flamed, and even from that distance the boy could see that they were not the kind used by his people—sticks of resinous wood that charred and smoked as it burned. This light burned steadily with a blue flame, and it was produced by a fluid obtained by fermenting and distilling maize. Little cups of this liquid were set in the upright handles, which were made of ivory ornately carved and set with many-colored stones. He had seen a similar light in a great urn in the centre of the chief's tent during the interval the curtains had been unclosed, and now he suddenly saw it again, for Aman was standing in the door calling to the Nubian:

“Zenock, loose the boy and bring him here.”

The tall black figure approached, and in a moment the braided ropes were falling from Joseph's wrists and ankles and he swung his left leg over the pommel and rose and stood on the ground.

The slave held out a bowl of clear water and a snowy linen cloth, and when Joseph had washed himself and straightened as best he could his stained and torn linen under-tunic, which formed (since Levi had taken away with such black violence his embroidered coat) his only clothing, he followed the Nubian to the tent and entered with him. Then there was a slight rustle as the curtains fell, and he knew that he stood in the presence of the Ishmaelite alone. He straightened his lithe form and looked up.

The glance of eagle and of eaglet met.

The flashing eyes of the chief seemed less fierce now that the overshadowing turban was removed, and a smile played in his black beard as he looked at the lad. When he spoke his voice was grave, but neither harsh nor sneering.

“Come here to me, boy,” he said, and Joseph walked over and stood before him. The keen dark eyes of the Arab lingered on the golden tracings on the hem of the tunic thus brought so near to them, and did not overlook the fineness of the garment itself or fail to note the beautiful embroidery on the doeskin sandals which still clung—albeit in tatters—to the slender feet.

Joseph repaid his scrutiny with level glances that were not bold nor yet afraid, and stood waiting for his questions. They came at last.

“I and my caravan came from Gilead in the east,” he said, “and I have seen all there was for sale in fabrics and in flesh along the way; But never have I, until this day at Dothan, beheld a slave like you.”

A wave of crimson swept over Joseph’s face at the word, but he made no reply. The Arab went over to a couch and threw himself back among the cushions. He took a tiny dagger with a jewelled hilt from his sash and laid it lengthwise in his hand.

“Speak and tell me,” he said, regarding it,

“if you could choose a weapon for your greatest hurt, would you take this or that sharp word that made you cringe just now?”

Joseph hesitated and half put out his hand. The quick breaths struggled in his bosom. Then he lifted his head and answered proudly:

“I will take the word, O chief. I will be a slave that I may learn to wait my hour of mastery.”

Aman returned the span-long dagger to its place.

“I bought you at the fountain *Ain el Hufirah*,” he said. “Twenty pieces of silver I dropped into the hollow palm of a shepherd who had wished you dead. Now—for I must grant the matter seems not clear to me—what had Jacob’s wrangling sons to do with you?”

“They are my brothers,” began the boy, in answer; but to his surprise the Arab interrupted passionately:

“Brothers, say you? By the splendor of the King, I deemed not that your wrong struck root as deep as this. Nor knew I that

the Hebrew decked his sons to catch the eye of traders in the mart of slaves."

His fierce glance roamed over the lad's fine garment as he spoke. But before Joseph could frame a reply, he continued in a tone in which bitterness had given place to sorrow:

"I, too, might tell of wrongs; for I am of the tribe of Ishmael; and I might speak of deeper griefs, since they were borne by woman, than it is given men to feel—even of Hagar, dying in the waterless desert, with a Hebrew kiss still burning on her lips."

He sprang to his feet and paced the narrow confines of the tent under stress of emotion. Then he came back and resumed his place, saying quietly:

"But speak and tell me how this matter came to pass. I had in store so great a hate for Jacob's sons it almost pleases me that you have fallen in my power, and that your grief has robbed my hands of violence."

He turned with a soft glance toward the lad, and Joseph told his story simply to the end, dwelling on the dreams that he had boasted of

so foolishly and speaking of his father's favor—the presentation of the many-colored coat—and his brothers' jealousy. And as he listened the rage of the desert man flamed against Jacob. He sprang up once more and lifted an accusing hand toward the south.

"Weep in your tents, old man!" he cried. "Call for the son of your age and sleep unanswered. You who deceived your father and usurped your brother are by your sons left desolate and betrayed!"

Joseph laid his hand upon his arm.

"Stop!" he cried, with a thrill in his young voice. "Say nothing evil of my father. He loves me well, and he is good."

"Peace," called a voice from the adjoining pavilion; "all fathers are good. I am going to feed mine now with meat and spiced cherries and cheeses."

The chief's brow lost its frown.

"Come in, Louimma, little one," he called, and a slight and graceful maiden ran between the curtains and paused, looking at Joseph with frank curiosity. The Arab saw her

glances and stepped forward, moved by a sudden friendly impulse toward the boy.

“Louimma,” he said quietly, “this is your kinsman. A son of Abraham, driven, like our father Ishmael, from his own. Take his hand and lead him to our table. I will come.”

CHAPTER V

A Son of a Star

ZENOCK pushed aside the tent curtain and a rosy shaft of morning light parted the dusk and fell on the boy, asleep on cushions of sweet grass. The slave stood a moment watching him. The naked limbs seemed white and slim against the crimson drapery of the couch, but under the satin smoothness of the arms that wreathed his head great muscles moved in mutinous unrest, and the deep chest told of endurance and power. The black man nodded to his own unspoken thought and bent to touch the lad lightly on his shoulder.

Joseph leaped from a dream and shook off the hand fiercely; but when he saw the face of the Nubian above him he smiled into it confusedly and murmured that he had been asleep.

“Ay, and dreaming of pits and panthers, I

warrant," responded Zenock. "But peace. I have come not to eat you, but to bring you meat. There is a little spring ten spears' length from the weeping tree where last your camel knelt; and when you have freshened your spirit at the bath you shall strengthen your body with food."

He threw a cloak about him as he spoke, and Joseph ran out and away through the trees in the direction indicated. When he came back a few moments later, shaking his wet hair as a tawny young lion shakes his mane, he noticed coming from the north a number of horsemen, and for a moment thought that his brothers had been driven either by fear or repentance to seek him out and take him home again. But a closer view showed that the men were horse traders, for each one was leading or driving two or three unsaddled steeds, an occupation which was evidently giving them much serious trouble, as the untrained animals plunged and reared and tried to get away. Joseph had a sudden rush of pity for them in his heart. But yes-

terday he had known bonds. He walked back thoughtfully, and Zenock gave him his tunic and led him to his cushions, where the meal awaited him.

There was young lamb broiled over coals of resinous wood and sprinkled with crushed millet and other spices, and candied fruits so delicately prepared that they were transparent and caught the sunlight like jewels; and there were white beans sprinkled with cinnamon. From a huge skin in a shady corner the slave poured a cup of water; it gurgled through the narrow mouth noisily; and the boy ate and drank until the irregular beat of horses' feet without told him that the traders had drawn near.

He went out and saw that the entire front of the main tent had been lifted on tall javelins, forming a wide awning, under which Aman and his wife and daughter stood watching with interest the approach of the horses. Joseph advanced with respectful salutations, and after a friendly greeting from the chief stopped beside him. The merchantmen and

slaves were moving toward an opening in the grove, and there, as they came abreast, the newcomers halted and were soon engaged in disposing of their herd. One after another each horse was separated from the rest and led or ridden up and down the highway, while its voluble owner discoursed upon its fine points to the intending purchaser. Few of the animals had been broken to the bridle, for, as it is well known, once an Arab and his horse have learned to meet each other's eyes there can be no question of parting between them save when it comes by death. And as the slaves of the merchants tried to mount they were thrown and eluded and trodden down by the frightened and rebellious creatures fresh from their silent *wadis* between the eastern hills. Joseph watched the struggle with an interest made clear by his late experience.

"My friends would take a herd of the desert horses into Egypt," said Aman. "Pharaoh's stables are ever open for the best, and the others soon find owners. It is even said the king has built a palace for his favorite steed as

high as the third pyramid, and it is hollowed from a single block of green stone."

"I love the king for that," cried Louimma, gayly. "He pays his honors well."

An old sheik presented himself at the entrance of the pavilion and made a deep salaam to Aman. Close by stood a black horse of remarkable beauty, and a spirit which had given place to madness on account of the indignity of his position—for each glossy, slender leg was tied by a rope of camel's hair and held by a slave, while the fifth gigantic Libyan humiliated the beautiful neck with a bridle. A line of foam on the horse's sensitive lips, and the wild turning of the great bloodshot eyes showed the agony and shame he suffered. But the sheik had business with Aman.

"Lord of the Ishmaelites," he said, "behold my offering. He is the son of a star, and my gardens will be in darkness if I return to them without him. But my great need leads me to the door of a stranger."

Aman's practiced eyes caught the smile

under the old man's tangled brows and he entered into the spirit of the trading.

"He is bridle wise, good sheik?" he asked gravely.

"Noble chief, a child might guide him."

"Do you, then, who are not a child, but a man, old and cunning, show us something of his ways."

The trader bowed deeply.

"Said I not, O chief, that he was a son of a star? Shall I who am an old man, as you say, weary of days and poor, attempt to soar so high?"

Aman laughed and pointed to the slaves, whose greatest efforts were put forth to hold the straining Arab.

"I see," he said, "it takes some strength to bind your star to earth. Bid one of your blacks mount him."

The sheik called to the slave at the bridle. He dropped it stolidly and leaped to the horse's back, only to be tossed like a ball and flung ten good feet away, while the four at the ropes reeled and fell against each other.

The old man combed his beard with nervous fingers.

"How now?" asked Aman, smilingly. "Have you any in your company fit to ride your star?"

"No," growled the trader. "A lion in leash would be as easily conquered. Many horses have learned my will, but this one has a tempest in his eyes and its lightnings in his nostrils. Let him who can bring him to the halter. I would keep whole bones to lay beside my fathers."

He gave a sharp signal to the slaves to lead the horse away, but Joseph sprang suddenly forward and stood before Aman.

"Let me go to him, O chief," he said eagerly. "I have felt as he feels. I may not conquer, but I can comfort him."

Aman glanced at the slender youth and shook his head; but Louimma reached up and dented his dark cheek with the tip of her little henna-stained finger.

"Either my cousin or I, my father," she said. "That steed stays in the tents of Aman."

Aman looked around to nod consent; but Joseph had heard the little law-giver and had waited for no more.

The horse recoiled when the boy lifted his hand; but he did not spring, as they had all expected, when the light touch fell on his arched neck and travelled gently down until it found and pressed the great nerve between the glossy shoulders. For a time there was no effect, then the tossing head turned sharply around toward Joseph. Louimma gave a shrill cry, and the chief paled at the thought of seeing those terrible teeth close upon that young shoulder. But the eyes that had not flinched at *Ain el Hufireh* did not quail as the wondering, distracted orbs of a frightened horse met them. Instead, they gazed steadily and kindly back; and after a moment the boy raised his other hand and laid it upon the soft muzzle caressingly. So they stood for a little space eye to eye, and then Joseph told the slaves to go away, and he knelt down and unfastened the ropes that bound each slender limb, lifting, as he did so, each delicate hoof

to let it rest for a moment in his palm. The horse remained perfectly still while its hind feet were given their freedom, watching the operation with discerning eyes. But when the lad came to the fore feet, and lifted one after the other gently up into his hand, the beautiful, pointed head bent low and rested lovingly upon his shoulder.

The group at the tent had witnessed all, and now the trader remembered his profession.

“Said I not so, O chief?” he cried, rubbing his hands together. “Said I not that a child could conquer him?”

But Aman handed him a purse without a word and kept his glance upon Joseph.

“He is the son of a star,” said the old man, fearful that he had not received enough, and yet mindful of the desert etiquette which forbade him to count it. “He should bring—alas, that I should have to leave him with a stranger!—as much as ten pieces of silver.”

“Go your ways content,” replied Aman. “See, your company grows small against the

sky as it journeys in the distance. I have paid you double what you ask me."

The sheik made his farewells, but Aman did not hear. His heart looked out of his eyes at Joseph. And as the trader and his slaves mounted and rode away he saw the lad spring to the horse's back, and bend, and gently, with both hands, turn the intelligent face toward the tent. There was a moment of indecision, and then, with lifted head and proudly conscious air, the steed stepped forth and only paused when they had reached the awning. For a moment the boy sat still. Then he sprang down and turned to Louimma.

"See," he cried, "I have brought you a horse worthy of Pharaoh's emerald chamber." And, bold in his joy, he loosed the long ribbon from her hair, and throwing it around the horse's neck replaced it in her hand. But Aman, smiling, threw the string away.

"To-day," he said abruptly, looking from the ambush of his brows upon the boy, "we travel south toward Hebron. Mayhap the

way will lead by Jacob's tents. 'Tis yours to choose whether your path leads on to Egypt—or ends there."

Joseph turned his face away. It was pale with a boy's sharp yearning for his home. Louimma went softly out and left him, and the chief stood like a statue in the door. The horse seemed waiting for the pressure of his master's knees; even the distant tents grew strangely still.

Then Joseph raised his eyes. They swam in tears, but he was not ashamed.

"My way, O chief," he said, "leads on to Egypt."

CHAPTER VI

The Eagle's Flight

THE palms waved in the forenoon wind from the sea; while the hair tents were folded and the equipments and furniture—ample enough in quantity and luxurious enough in quality to adorn a palace—were reduced to the space of the camels' panniers and made ready for removal. All the work incident to the departure of the caravan had been accomplished with noiseless haste, and now the slaves with the outfit of the camp were travelling southward in advance at morning speed.

Layah, the wife of Aman, was in her basket of woven palm stems on the back of a huge white camel, which was still comfortably kneeling in the shade of the weeping tree. This animal was richly caparisoned with a cloth of purple byssus, three-piled from the Sidon looms, and embroidered all around its sides

with white and colored stones. Its head-dress and the pendants swinging from the saddle were of rope made from silvery silk hair, and a little canopy above shielded the rider from the sun. Louimma had been similarly mounted along the way from Damascus to the present encampment, but now that they were within two days' easy journey to Memphis she begged her father to let her ride her horse the remainder of the way. Aman demurred at first at this, remembering that the highways between Philistia and the sea had been broken by wagons hauling great blocks of stone from Gilboa for Pharaoh's buildings. But Layah, so sweet of face and small of stature that her taller daughter called her "little mother," was an Egyptian; and she laughed at the thought of the great king leaving a road unrepaired for a whole season.

"Let the child have her horse," she said, smiling up at him with her long, lustrous eyes. "Her heart is an Arab; its beats are hoof music. Besides, there is no danger. Pharaoh's highways are by this time as smooth

as ribbons from Engannin to Kem. The last caravan reported that the Ethiopian slaves worked like black ants, each carrying many times his bulk in solid stone, to lay the floor for the king's chariots. Let the girl ride into Egypt like her father's daughter, on a horse."

Aman's eyes flashed pride and pleasure.

"A fearless heart dwells in this little tent," he said, with his hand on her shoulder; "and something, too, that may be mother pride. But be it as you wish."

"Come, son of Jacob," he called to the boy, who at that moment came up from the fountain with the black horse, "and bring the steed yonder to be a running mate for the lion you have tamed."

He pointed to a slender-limbed Arabian grazing a short distance from where the tents had stood. And as Joseph ran to do his bidding Louimma darted from an oleander thicket and caught his sleeve.

"You need not go to the foot of the hill for my horse, O Conqueror," she said, with a proud lifting of her pretty chin. "All the steeds in Syria are not subdued by you."

Her folded hand was like a pink-lined shell. She raised it to her lips and blew a soft whistle through it, and the sound had scarcely died away when there came a beating of unshod hoofs over the turf, and in a moment a beautiful head was bending for her caresses.

“Said I not so?” she said triumphantly. “Come, I will lead them both—this star of mine and your black-muzzled prince—up to my father.”

Her hand was on her horse’s neck, and she reached toward the wild black mane of the other. Joseph stepped in between them with a cry of fear.

“Do not so,” he said hurriedly. “Remember he is all untrained. See, the flutter of your garment frightens him.”

She stamped her sandalled foot, and with a haughty glance at the boy caught her little fingers in the sweeping mane.

“I will lead them both,” she said, “up to my father.” And before Joseph had time to protest again, the will behind her tiny hands had drawn those two great creatures into a

sober pace as she calmly walked between them up the hill.

The chief's swarthy face paled as he looked at her, and he shot an angry glance at Joseph, who came running up behind. But the little mother laughed with pride.

"Child of Aman," she cried in her shrill, sweet voice, "even so have I seen your father walk between his friends. But come, tie my veil and let us set forth. We shall cover but a few miles before Bel reaches high heaven."

The Nubian, Zenock, came up with the trappings, and when Louimma's horse was made ready and adorned with his set of silver bells, and she had leaped from the slave's broad hand to the saddle, he turned toward the black cautiously. But the Arab's wild eyes roved, and his nostrils flared to show a line of flame, until Joseph, throwing himself upon the quivering back, bent low and made, with his arms, the only yoke the desert steed would suffer; and they were away like the wind, Louimma and the brown horse following.

The camp had been pitched on the northern

border of Shechem, and a few miles' traveling, during which the little company had become more compact, brought them to a low hill overlooking the barley fields and orchards. Joseph, who was riding by the side of Aman, looked across the flowering acres sadly.

"But yesterday, O friend," he said, "this land was mine." He stretched his arm wide, from the east seaward. Then it dropped to his side and he rode on in silence.

"And yesterday, O son of Jacob," said the chief, "I crossed the southbound, three-laked Jordan above Engannin, and from a crag of Carmel saw an eaglet driven from its nest that it might learn to fly. Straight as a rock it fell a little way, and then some untaught wisdom spread its wings, and there it was, at balance, in mid air. Then, as it held its place, the eagles came and showed the plan and cunning of the flight. Rising from the mountain in the very eye of the sun, they made small circles and waited on their wings until the fledgling tried; then they took a second larger sweep, and paused to see the

young wings follow them. And so again and still again, rising ever toward the sun and enlarging the ascending spiral until slowly, but with increasing confidence and strength, the eaglet mounted after them, and with a bold and splendid lift of wings flew from my sight."

He paused and looked at the boy narrowly.

"Your lesson is less kind, O son of Jacob," he said, "but learn it well. To-morrow we shall be in Egypt, where I may find you place among the officers of the court or some small occupation in the town; or, failing that, you may return with my caravan to the shawl tents east of Gilead."

"I cannot speak my thanks, O chief," the lad answered. "Do with me as you will."

Louimma had ridden up, and now crowded her horse between the steeds ridden by Aman and Joseph.

She was a girl of twelve years; tall and slender as a sapling palm and full of laughter. Her hair, which she wore in the fashion of her Egyptian mother, flowing over her shoulders, was blue-black, and her eyes, of the same hue,

had the softness of the spring midnight. She was dressed in a long tunic of the coarse, white lustrous silk woven in Damascus, and a thinner piece of the same fabric was held by a coral band around her head and allowed to fall over her hair. As she pushed the head of her horse between the flanks of the two in front of her, she called:

“I have a message from the little mother. She says there is a grove ahead of oak trees and sycamore, and the place looks as though it hid a spring.”

“There is a fountain less than the length of a shepherd’s staff from that lordliest tree,” said Joseph; but Louimma frowned on him.

“I like not your words,” she said. “In the tents we measure but by spears.”

“I also am a tent dweller,” he answered stoutly, “but we have little need for spears among the flocks.” Then he stopped, chagrined and without defense, for her rosy lips still curled.

“If I were a man,” said Louimma, “I would be a warrior with a battle-ax, and ar-

rows, and a javelin tipped with red gold. I would not sit with a hooked staff among the sheep."

The scorn in her tone brought a quick blush to his cheek. He was a shepherd, and, with the pride that always lingers in the heart of a boy, he answered that he wished to spend his life among the sheep. But by the flash in the young maid's eyes he read his fate. He knew he would take up that peaceful staff no more.

Aman, who had ridden back to ride beside Layah, now called:

"Halt at the grove. We will rest and refresh ourselves there until the sun descends westward." And they turned off from the highway and rode slowly among great boled and branching trees, where they soon dismounted and spread rugs and skins to recline upon. Joseph walked with the chief to an elevation where he could point out the divisions of his father's possessions. Far on the north, high above the green dappled fields of Dothan and the plain Esdraelon, rose the white crest of Mount Hermon. Before them on the east

lay all of Syria, a green valley with the Jordan in its embrace, and on either side of this deep vale, two mighty walls of mountains—the Syrian ranges—which, with the valley, make the three distinct divisions of the land. Straight down from Lebanon runs the western range, rugged at the north and sweeping in gradations, down and down until the feet of the hills are burned in the desert of the south. But the eastern wall springs out of Hermon's lofty side, and, sinking swiftly to 2,000 feet above the sea, stands like a bulwark on the Hauran plains until the River Yarmuk cuts a channel through it for its silver flood, and little vales from Gilead intersect it; and here and there along the way to the Arabian plateau, which finally gathers to itself the last low hills, volcanoes wave their plumes of rose and gray against the placid azure of the sky.

Joseph indicated the boundary lines of the estate as well as he could do so. Beautiful and productive country, smiling with fields and gardens, but the Arab looked out upon them with frowning eyes.

"I have no love for Jacob," he said abruptly. "But I like well your ways; and I counsel you, when you go down to Egypt, go not as Jacob's son. The caravans that come and go bear laden packs of tales. A scorpion from these gardens might sting you by the Nile."

In the cool of the afternoon the caravan started, and after a steady march camped at midnight a mile to the north of Hebron. A company of Bedouins had pitched their shawl tents near the place and a dance was in progress in the open-walled pavilion. Zenock and the other slaves who had gone on ahead had Aman's tent in readiness, and Layah and her daughter at once entered it. But in response to an invitation brought by a slave, Aman and Joseph went over to watch the entertainment. A sheik from beyond Esdraelon was their host, and he met them at the entrance to the tent and led them to a place on the cushions at the end of the enclosure directly in front of the performer.

A band of musicians woke a curious melody from hollow reeds and flat drums, and a girl

clashed cymbals in her hands and danced and swayed into the measures, as though she were in some way the visible expression of both sound and motion. Her dress was a fabric as light as woven moonbeams and it clothed her like a cloud. Forward, backward, she floated; and then, as the instruments cried hoarsely, she took a hoop set all around with dagger blades and leaped in and out of its jagged circle and whirled it swiftly around her sun-stained arms. Then she stood upright and bent backward—as only a reed beneath a gale has learned the art to bend—until the red gold of her hair had met her heels, while, with the hoop of swords whirling with incredible swiftness in her hands, she flung herself around and around with the rotary motion of a wheel until she and her hoop were like two rings of light in space.

Joseph walked back with Aman; and the sound of the cymbals lingered in his ears. But when the camp was asleep he lay among his pillows with his eyes staring into the soft darkness. Now and then he heard the cry of a

lamb from his father's flocks in the near valley; the lowing call of kine from hill to hill. At last he arose and drew aside the curtain and went out. The fields were in a flood of silver light and toward the south, dull black against the starry purple of the heavens, loomed the skin tents of Jacob. The boy gazed until he could see no more, and then hid his face in his folded arms and wept.

At dawn the camp was all astir with preparations for departure, and before the sun was two hours old the little company, riding as before, were on the way. Their neighbors had evidently gone noiselessly in the darkness, for their bright tents had disappeared.

Aman and Joseph rode together at the head of the caravan. They were silent; but the bright voices of Layah and her daughter came up to them on the light morning breeze. The road led west of Jacob's possessions and the boy passed by steadily. Aman saw the pain in the young face, but wisely made no sign. There was movement and life among the people. Women were going to and fro, carrying

water in jars upon their heads or shoulders; children were playing and shepherds could be seen among their flocks. Still the lad looked straight in front of him until the place was passed, and south of Hebron the highway sharply turned to run westward through Philistia. Here, all of a sudden, the red hills crouched down and gave the first sight of the sea. But Joseph looked back as he reached this place, and saw, on a height, and dark against the morning sky, an old man, in the garments of mourning.

CHAPTER VII

Mizraim

FOR hours the eyes of the tent-dwelling Joseph had rested in wonder on the temples, obelisks, and pyramids, which at first appeared as small black points against the horizon, but gradually lifted themselves from the sands until they seemed to meet and pierce the sky.

As the travellers neared their destination by the caravan road, from east to west there was not so much as a little hill to make a shadow. But a sudden turn to the south showed the green and marshy plains caught by the arms of rugged hills which were mirrored in the tawny waters of a river.

Aman, who knew the country, described it to the boy as they approached, and pointed out the important buildings of the capital until evening came and blotted them against the sky and all Mizraim—for such was the ancient

name of the land now known as Egypt—lay like a cool, green lily under the still darkness.

Zenock took the brass brazier which had been his special care against all the accidents of travel and set it on the ground by the roadside; and after he had quickened the coals by blowing into them huge blasts from his mighty lungs the other servants dipped and set blazing the oiled wicks of their torches, and then ran with the lights held aloft to form a foot guard for the chief and his company. The fire-box replaced before him on the camel, Zenock urged his beast ahead, and so, making slow progress, they came to where the Nile stretched a red arm between them and the city. The place was the terminal of the great highway, and there was an inn for the accommodation of the many traders who came down from Damascus and the spice regions of Gilead. The noise of the arrival was heard in the house, and as the company dismounted a door was thrown open and a shaft of light struck through the soft, black night, and Jubal, the innkeeper, came out to welcome the guests it illuminated.

Joseph had never been within stone walls before, and he gazed about with boyish curiosity. The lofty central chamber was rude enough in that land of builders, but its painted columns and vaulted roof seemed majestic to him, and he looked at the carved chairs and tables and other articles of furniture with amazement. There were numerous smaller rooms opening from this main apartment, and into one of these Layah and Louimma were conducted with their women attendants; but when the lady and her daughter had been given refreshments the host returned to Aman and attentively studied him. Then he took a tablet from his sash and began what proved to be a reasonably accurate portrait of the Arab on its ivory surface.

“For seven years, O Aman of Arabia,” he said, as he worked deftly with a little pencil of camel’s hair. “For seven years and more I have pictured your face on my record book and numbered your household and slaves; but”—he stopped and finished with a few telling strokes the likeness, and then turned

and looked sharply at Joseph—"this lad seems not of your tribe. He is a stranger."

Aman laughed and laid his arm across the young Hebrew's shoulders.

"Make a fair picture of the boy, O Jubal," he said, "and write on your tablet beneath it: 'Dath, son of Aman the Ishmaelite.'"

The landlord bowed, but a smile hid in the corners of his beard, and when the sketch on the tablet was complete it bore the inscription—and something more:

"Dath, son of Aman the Ishmaelite—with the eyes and the lip of Canaan."

When the little set of ivory leaves had been replaced in his girdle, Jubal went to give directions for the refreshment and lodging of his guests, and the two stood and looked at each other a moment in silence.

"That name," said the chief, "is a key to lock you from the spies and to open, at your need, the tents of Kedar."

The boy went close and laid his arms around the Arab's shoulders; but he could not speak, and thus they stood for a moment's

space in wordless understanding. Then together they walked down the long room and came to a halt beside two Egyptians playing draughts on a checkered board, which they held between them on their knees. The pieces were of porcelain, red and black, and all of the same size and form—cat-headed figures an inch and a half in height on a circular base—and the players moved them with slow and precise calculation, and did not even raise their eyes as the strangers approached. Aman, after watching them a short moment, without receiving look or word of greeting, lifted a disdainful shoulder and walked away, and after a while the boy saw him beckoning him from the doorway. He went across, as Louimma came running toward them, exclaiming:

“Music, father. There are singing harps floating in these black waters. Let us go out and listen.”

She slipped her friendly little hand into Joseph's, and Aman walked with them out between the columns of the portico. A sound

strangely weird and mournful came to them from the distance.

"These are the funeral barges," said the chief. "The Egyptians come down their River of Life to the tomb. Hark, their hymn is to Ra, the receiver of souls."

Men's deep voices could be heard intoning as the boats appeared curving across the waters, the whole procession gliding like a black serpent spotted with light; its head the golden-prowed barge in which lay the embalmed dead, in its garments of cloth of silver, within a circle of torches. The rowers of this boat stood on either side and dipped their oars to the rhythmic measures of the dirge:

"Lord of the Light, uncover thy glowing
bosom.

Make there a nest for a white dove winging
upward.

Give her who comes to thee room for her
spirit."

Slowly the papyrus fleet made its way over the waters, and women's voices took up the

chanting, while the light from the torches flickered weirdly over their white-robed figures and lily-crowned, streaming hair, and disclosed the sheen of the wailing instruments they carried.

Louimma gave a little shiver as the procession moved onward down the river.

"I like not that," she said. "Come, boy, tell me some merry tale. See, Vega has hung her lamp in the north and I can read your eyes, so you must make me a true one."

They sat down in the doorway, and Aman went past them into the house.

"Now," said Louimma, tucking her little sandalled feet under her drapery and making a rest of her hand for her pretty chin. "Now tell me."

"Once," he began, "one of my lambs fell into a pool and was drowned."

"Well?" said the girl, after a moment's waiting. "Go on. What then?"

"There was nothing then," replied the shepherd.

"Nothing then," repeated Louimma, scorn-

fully. "And you call that a story? Can you not say how it wandered away and cried alone on the mountains? Was there no lion to roar and frighten it, and no mother calling for it from the fold?"

The lad flushed, and answered angrily:

"When a tale is told, it is told. I have not so many words to give the telling of it."

"But did you nothing when you found it in the water?"

"Yes. We roasted it in a pit of sand, and——"

But Louimma was weeping and beating him with her hands, and Aman had to come out to make peace between them. But even then she would have no more to say, and soon went indoors and to her room with her head held high and her eyes flashing. Joseph looked at the chief in perplexity and caught the Arab's smiling glance.

"I saw you tame a wild horse from the desert, my son," he said, "and there are those who think it less a task to understand a woman. But I warrant your tongue is slower

than your wit. And that is well. 'Tis oftener the other way where we are going. But come. A few hours lie between us and your future. Shall we go and seek favor with the king that you may learn court speeches for your tongue's loosening, or will you try what schooling you may have in war? The miserable Cush are troubling the border."

Up to that moment Joseph had had no idea of what the days were to be to him, but now he remembered Louimma's words:

"If I were a man I would be a warrior," and he answered:

"I would learn the uses of the spear, my father; the shepherd's staff has fallen from my hand."

CHAPTER VIII

Winged Arrows

LAYAH and Louimma came up from the rush-bordered pool formed by a small inlet in the river where they had taken their morning bath, to find Joseph watching the portage of the goods and the animals across the water. A large raft manned by a number of Ethiopians was moored to the wharf, and the loading was going on with system and rapidity. The horses, rearing and prancing in distrust, were led on to the platform of reed-bound cypress trunks. But while they stood in the centre, striking hollow sounds with their pawing hoofs and requiring all the skill of Zenock and the other slaves to keep them from overturning the raft, the camels were led on and formed into a circle, making an effectual living wall between the horses and the river. The animals might have swam the distance, which was less than half a mile at

this point, in the time of the receding waters. But crocodiles were a constant menace to swimmers, and just now doubly dangerous because they were being hunted with spears by sportsmen from the cities as far north as Tanis, and lost not an opportunity to vent their rage on any helpless thing. It had been the habit of the hunters to bait them with a little pig on a hook. The men, dressed in hides to make them appear like the creatures they pursued, carried living pigs, which they caused to squeal vigorously when the pointed snout of the crocodile was lifted from the river and his suspicious eyes fastened on the bait. Reassured by the squeal that the morsel was to his liking, the huge beast seized it only to find himself caught, while the crocodiles he had seen sunning themselves on the bank suddenly changed to men. It was then a sportsman's triumph to take the living monster back to the city. But the fashion of the sport had been changed, and now the approach of the hunters in light and easily capsized boats lent an element of danger and fairness to the chase.

When the raft had been nicely balanced with the skilful lading the Ethiopians pushed off, and by the use of poles and paddles made their way slowly across the stream to the crowded wharf of the city; and Aman remained with his family where they had spent the night. The temples of rose-colored marble and the magnificence of the life now plainly visible on the other side filled the boy with a sudden eagerness to find his part in it. Then he looked at Louimma and the glow faded. Her home was in the tents east of Gilead. A wave of nameless desolation swept over him, and his eyes cleared of their veil of tears to see the girl beside him and feel her little hand slip into his own.

“My father says that you will be a soldier,” she said, “and fight for Pharaoh. I wish I were a man and I would ride behind you in your chariot and teach you how to use the bow.”

A flush crept over the boy's face, but he turned in bashful earnestness.

“I would like that well,” he answered, “and

if ever I have a chariot I shall come for you."

"Oh, I said if I were a man."

"Yes," said Joseph, "but I should like you as well as you are. Can you, in truth, use the bow?"

"Does the daughter of the greatest archer in Arabia know the way of the arrow?" she said teasingly. "Wait."

She ran to where a number of short spears and bows with quivers lay on the ground with some other articles of personal property which were to be carried over with their owners, and selecting a weapon from among them hurried back to Joseph.

"A cedar of Lebanon gave this to me," she said, exhibiting a slender and beautifully polished bow. But the lad looked bewildered as he took it.

"A cedar is a tree; it does not make gifts," he said at length. But she snatched the disputed article from his hand and stamped her foot.

"Go back to your sheep," she cried, "and when the leaves hold little hands above your

head and sprinkle you at evening with the dew say that 'they make no gift.' And when their great, kind branches beckon down the rain say that 'they make no gift.' Oh, I would rather be a lamb to bleat and 'baa' than be a shepherd with so little wit!"

The tears were in her eyes, and Joseph hung his head in speechless misery.

But the temper of the Arab's daughter was over in a breath.

"Come," she said, smiling like Spring; "here is a shaft tipped with jasper and winged with the feather of a white eagle. Give me a mark."

He looked about. "There," he said; "the blight on the body of that palm, ten staff—spears' length from here."

She laughed.

"A night bird sits and plots up on the high plumed tree an hundred spears' length off toward the desert. My arrow goes to him."

She raised the bow, and fixing the shaft in the centre of the string drew them back between her thumb and finger until the wood

curved to a shining arc, and the arrow, aimed from her ear, made a straight path for her keen bright eye to travel. Then with a song the arrow sped, and Joseph saw a feather fall to earth as the bird rose and flew away.

He caught the girl's hands and shook them; and she was smiling proudly when Aman, who had witnessed the shot, came up to lift her in his arms and praise her even to her complete satisfaction. Then she turned to Joseph.

"Take the bow," she said; "or wait. I will get another. And it must be a heavier and stronger one, suited to your great muscles. You shall have your first lesson now." She ran to the heap of weapons and then came back with the one she had selected. "See," she said, "you must hold the bow thus—even as you saw me but now—and pinch the arrow and string together—so."

She laid her hand over his, and standing at his shoulder drew back the arrow with him.

"Good!" she cried, as he slackened the bow. "Now we must choose a mark. Something not too hard to reach, lest the shaft

grow weary of its long flight. What shall it be?"

Joseph threw back his head and laughed.

"Look," he said. "What is that dark and swiftly moving speck against the sky?"

He pointed to an object high above them.

"I know not," said Louimma. "I cannot see so far."

"I will bring it closer," he said quietly; and then stepping a space backward, with a motion full of grace and power he drew the bow. There was a sharp twang, a sudden dart of silver light parting the air, and then a dark mass hurtling downward to their feet. Louimma stood amazed and speechless beside her equally silent father. But Joseph stooped and lifted the bird.

"It is a hawk," he said; and began extricating the arrow without another word.

Louimma went and stood beside him. Her eyes were full of pride and her cheeks glowed.

"Father," she cried imperiously, "which is the greater archer, my cousin or thou?"

Aman's dark eyes shone.

"Never," he said, "have I seen so true an eye and hand—I who know the arrow craft of Ishmael. Where did you learn it, boy?"

"The sons of Jacob are drilled for different offices, O chief," answered the lad. "Some to the sling, and some to the short ax, and some to the staff. I chose the bow."

"And you chose wisely," said Aman. "The very stars might tremble at your arrows."

He walked away and entered the building. But when Joseph looked at the girl again her round brown arms were wreathed about her face. The boy stood perfectly still and made no sign. He felt that his feet had suddenly taken root in the red sand. He could not move or speak, but his heart ached miserably. He dumbly looked his agony.

Louimma took a little peep through her fingers at his face.

"Well!" she said. "Am I not weeping?"

"Yes," said Joseph dully; "do not so."

"That will I," she responded. "Hear me now," and she wailed until he wrenched his

feet from the detaining earth and ran to throw his arm about her. Then she grew suddenly quiet and smiled up at him.

"I am sorry that you are such a mighty archer," she said. "If you had asked me why I wept, I should have told you so."

"Why?" he asked. "You seemed well pleased."

"Yes, but I was not," she answered, sighing. "You will not need a second in your battle chariot, and I shall have no need to show you all the magic of the bow."

"That is well," he answered. "I should turn coward with you near me if there was aught of harm I could not keep from you."

Louimma glanced quickly to his face; but she did not look ill-pleased as she questioned softly:

"Why?"

"I know not," answered Joseph, with a troubled brow; and with an exclamation of impatience the girl turned and ran into the house.

A few moments later the boat was ready to

convey the little company, now reduced to Aman's immediate family and two servants, across the river to Memphis, but as they were about to embark a gilded galley of sixteen oars came along, and the eight gleaming blades that faced them hung suddenly at rest. A pennant bearing a hawk in relief against a solar disk streamed from the single mast, and at sight of that emblem Layah bent until her dimpled fingers' tips swept the red sands. A young man on board leaned over the golden prow.

"Hail, Aman of Arabia!" he cried. "Peace and happiness to you and yours." He included in a graceful gesture the women and Joseph.

Aman replied to his greeting with every evidence of pleasure. "Happiness to you, O Captain of the great King," he answered, as he pressed to the edge of the lapping waters near the galley's side. "Happiness, but never peace, so I may keep your friendship. I warrant you but now are bound for war."

“Not so, good chief,” said the Egyptian, laughing. “The provinces, for the most part, have sent their tributes. Although Pharaoh has some thought to send an army as far as the rock cities of Seir. But our spears must have some practice in the waiting time, and it takes skill to sever with one thrust, where head and body meet, the life cord of the crocodile. The prince commands our hunter ship, but since he has sufficient spears, he seeks an archer. I would that we might press for service so great a bowman as are you, O son of Ishmael.”

Aman bowed at the compliment, and then glanced back to where Joseph stood with Layah and Louimma. The eyes of the boy met his with eager pleading. He stroked his beard thoughtfully as he turned to answer the Egyptian.

“I am a merchant, as you know, and head of the caravan trade from farthest Asia to the twin kingdoms. My taste is not for hunting, whether it be river beasts or men; but there is in my company a lad you may persuade to

join you. But first, how far south does your expedition lead? I would see the boy again before I return to Gilead."

"The prince has fixed no time; but in twenty days the seventh obelisk will be raised in Tanis and the king will make a festival. Be there, and I give promise you will meet your——"

He paused, looking at the Arab inquiringly. The chief spoke in a low tone, bending toward the man in the galley.

"There are stronger ties than those of race, O Potiphar," he said; "although the same blood that warms my heart courses full tide in that tall sapling yonder. In truth he is a Hebrew, but a Hebrew wronged. It was for his wrongs I loved him at the start; but now— Why, I have seen him tame a courser of the sands to the soft spirit of a young gazelle, and there is not an archer to compete with him in all Arabia."

"I take your word, O chief," said the officer. "Call the boy hither. By what name shall I record him in my company if, when the

hunt is over, we hear Pharaoh's war trumpet?"

Joseph had approached in answer to the chief's signal, and now Aman's hand was on his shoulder.

"Let him be known as Dath," he made answer. "And if any one seeks further, call him the son of your friend, Aman of Arabia."

Then he bent over and kissed the boy on both cheeks.

The captain was the one to break the silence.

"The king of the double crown would engage your services, my boy," he said. "Will you go with us, first south and then, with the strong gales, northward to Tanis?"

Joseph gazed with his clear, straight glance into the eyes above him.

"Yes, I will go," he said, and with a gesture of salutation he turned and walked up to where Layah and her daughter still waited.

"You are going?" Louimma asked the question, and he nodded answer.

"Now?"

“Yes.”

She put up her arms and laid them around his neck, drawing his cheek close to hers. Then she turned away. But that velvet touch remained—then and after.

“We shall see you at the capital,” said Layah, giving him her little henna-stained hand; “and we will keep your horse for you, unless Pharaoh should claim him for the emerald chamber.”

Joseph pressed her fingers to his brow; but when he took Louimma’s little palm extended toward him, and paid to it like reverence, it crept down until it rested on his lips, and staid there for a moment, trembling.

To Aman the boy had more to say.

“I have not forgotten, O my friend and master,” he said, with emotion, “that although you call me free, the purchase money that you gave to them at Dothan has not yet been repaid.”

“You are my son,” said Aman. “Forget not your name. This much will I require of you. If through the change of years it comes

within your power, mete out your justice well to Jacob's sons."

They stopped, and stood gazing into each other's eyes. Then from the galley came a trumpet call, and Joseph, without one look behind, ran down to the shore and with a long leap was on board. The rowers bent, and the watchers saw the rhythmic swing of oars, while, catching life with motion, at the mast fluttered the banner of the king.

CHAPTER IX

Under the Seventh Obelisk

IT was the festival of the seventh obelisk in Tanis. An hour before the dawn the people assembled in the court of the temple of the sun, there to await the rising of their god from the sea. There was no light save from the stars, which paled as the east changed from deep purple to gray violet; and then, as a plume of his corona waved suddenly above the horizon, the worshippers fell prone upon the earth and covered their sight from the dazzling face of Day. Only the priests watched the great orb come in his glory to his own. Then a single stroke on a golden bell, which hung above the altar in the centre of the sacred place, called the people to arise and lift their anthem to the morning. And as they stood with their arms stretched to the east, bands of singing children issued from the hall of the thousand columns in the temple and,

linked with garlands, wound in and out among the men and women choristers, their high, sweet tones soaring above the deeper ones as the notes of birds float through and over the diapason of the trees.

Some of these little white-robed children carried instruments of snakeskin, which they beat with their hands; others shook silver sistrums and clashed cymbals; and still another company played on double-pipes and seven-stringed guitars. Scarcely had these little ones found place when a band of young girls ran lightly from the temple. They were clad in garments of gauze in colors of red, yellow, green, and violet, and in their flowing hair diamonds shone like drops of rain. They moved forward in a noble arc of life and color, and then, as the chanting changed to a more rhythmic melody, before the obelisk which, like a rosy finger, pointed to the sky, they raised their dusky, jewel-laden arms, and with softly-meeting palms and swaying bodies fell into the measures of the rainbow dance.

Aman stood with Layah and Louimma within

the space reserved for distinguished guests between the court and the street of incense trees, through which the processions had to pass to reach the temple. At the conclusion of the dancing there was a sound of horses' hoofs and the rattle of wheels on the highway, and the king and queen rode up in a golden chariot, with their fan bearers and royal company on foot on either side of them. Layah, the Egyptian, swept down with the great human wave around her in a profound courtesy, but Aman stood erect and saluted Pharaoh with the gesture of the unconquered; while Louimma, looking frankly at the queen, cried, "Is she not beautiful?" in a tone so full of girlish sincerity that the woman in the chariot turned and smiled at the little Arabian, and with a sudden, impulsive gesture flung her a rose, which Louimma caught and gaily kissed.

At the base of the obelisk, which was tipped with gold and inscribed along its hundred feet of rose-colored granite with the record of the king's own victories, the royal couple took

their places to receive embassies bearing tribute from the provinces and to witness 'the civic and military parade, which formed an important part of the day's programme.

First came the foot-soldiers, marching in solid phalanxes and armed according to their department of the service. Those wielding spears and the heavy battle-axes had been chosen for their height and size, and were, for the most part, war captives from Ethiopia, whose black and naked shoulders towered above the heads of the archers who came after. These bowmen were dressed in short tunics of white linen and wore quilted helmets falling low over their shoulders, and following them came the charioteers, princes, and gentlemen, armed with straight swords and accompanied by archers and quiver bearers; and last of all, amid the shouts of the multitude, came the cavalry, troopers of the king, who drove in leash before their horses the captured lions they had brought from Abyssinia. The horsemen were dressed in purple tunics and wore helmets and round

shields of beaten gold and carried light javelins tipped with jasper.

“A mighty army, O chief,” said a bystander to Aman, “but not one hundredth part of those who answer Pharaoh’s golden trumpet when it wakes Mizraim on a battle morning. The king is wise; he does not show his strength until he needs it; nor does he put his captives into line for crowds to gaze at and, mayhap, pity. He keeps them in the quarries of Syene cutting stones to tell his kindnesses. But look! Here are the embassies. Yonder little people have come to delay the arrows of the king until they dig more pitfalls and multiply the traps and poisons in their forests.”

He indicated a band of pygmies approaching with huge baskets of palm fibre heaped with resinous gums and various medicinal roots and herbs.

Aman gazed at the dwarfed and ape-like creatures with aversion.

“I would rather go to fight a swarm of hornets,” he said. And the other answered with a laugh:

“ Even so would the king’s soldiers.”

Then came the Libyans clad in leopard skins and offering vessels of gold and silver; and the tribes of the south and east bringing emeralds from Zabara, and agates, rock crystal, and carnelians from the land of Punt, together with live monkeys, chattering parrots, and many furtive little creatures of the wilds. Most of these representatives of the far provinces were men, but here and there a woman, straight and tall as a young cypress, some dark princess clothed only in her majesty, strode with free step along the crowded way and turned eyes of limpid innocence on all she saw.

Layah and Louimma, tired of long standing and the crush of people about them, begged Aman to make a way for them out of the crowd. They were about to press forward in the wake of his broad shoulders when a loud and terrible cry, raised somewhere in the distance, cut a swath through the dense throng as a scythe cuts a path through a meadow, and as the people fell back on either side, leav-

ing the highway clear, a great Numidian lion leaped down the way, holding in his dripping jaws a little child.

For a moment following that awful, mother-cry there was perfect silence; then the great beast ran between two walls of sound, but no man dared to send an arrow after him lest he might strike, instead, the helpless babe. Layah covered her face, but Louimma bent forward and called shrilly:

“Is there no archer in Mizraim?” And, as if in answer, there was a sudden singing whisper in the tense air, and the tawny monster stopped still and dropped the child to earth. Then, with a roar like the threat of the storm in the valley, lashing and shaking in rage and agony, the lion leaped in the air and fell dead on the road.

Louimma threw her arms around her father and cried with laughter and tears together:

“He is here! He is here!”

And Aman felt no need to question as he answered proudly:

“It could have been none other.” Then he put his arm around his wife tenderly.

“Look up, little mother,” he said. “The child is saved and the beast, if I mistake not, has in his brain an arrow from our quiver. But come; none have a better right than we to stand beside the bowman now.”

A group had quickly gathered in the road, and the numbers were rapidly increasing. The child, who had been carried by his garments, was unhurt and now laughing in his nurse’s arms as she hurried back with him toward the temple. A few lingered to look at the lion stretched across their path and marvel at the skill that had sent a shaft so cleanly through his eye, but the greater portion of the multitude was farther down the road, where it hedged about a slender and embarrassed boy. Aman pushed his way through the throng, and Joseph rushed to embrace him.

“Take me hence,” he said to the chief in a whisper; “I know not what to say.” And they were just making their way toward

where Layah and Louimma waited when a woman, young and beautiful, burst through the circle and threw herself at Joseph's feet.

"A mother's thanks are yours, O archer," she cried, kissing his sandals, "and well shall my husband, captain of the king's regiment, reward you for what you have done this day."

Joseph stooped and lifted her gently.

"Mine is the joy, O wife of Potiphar," he answered, "that my arrow has been of service to my captain. I am of his company, and but an hour since came back from Thebes beside him."

CHAPTER X

The Story of a Love

IT was the time of the receding waters, but canals, like silken threads, still wound between the terraced banks on which were built the white walls of the capital, and the whole delta of the Nile was one shallow sea jewelled with islands.

At the close of the day's ceremonies the royal barge unfurled its painted sails and gave the signal for all Tanis to join the carnival; and as the gayly-bannered craft set out over the waters many of the larger galleys crowded to the Nilotic port and, forming an argosy like a glittering serpent of light, glided away over the wine-colored Mediterranean.

Joseph and Louimma sent their little papyrus boat into a sheltered cove beneath the rosy marble wall of the king's garden. It was almost evening, and over the cloudless azure of the sky there came a change so subtle that it

was felt rather than seen. The air became intense, expectant, tender; the birds grew still and the boy breathed softly and held the oars at rest, while shining drops ran down the blades and slipped back to the parent waters. All nature seemed to listen, but there was no sound. Only a little cloud flew like a white butterfly into the west; another followed, and its wings were tinged with mother-of-pearl; but the third was a flame, and it set the sky ablaze with glory. Then, a sea from out a sea, the mist arose, and tender arms of dusk bore the sun down to its fragrant billows; and, as the heavens blossomed into stars, Louimma looked in Joseph's face and smiled.

"Tell me," she said, "what did you on the galley of the king?"

"Nothing, in truth," he replied. "There was a slave for every task. I but shaped some arrow points and strung a score of the round bows for service."

The girl's eyes kindled with enthusiasm.

"When one of those same arrows flew to its mark to-day," she said, "I knew whose

hand had sent it. Ask my father if I did not say: 'Your friend is here.' "

"The shaft was not of those," he answered hurriedly. "I dared not trust so dull a messenger on so swift an errand. It was the little arrow that you gave to me; and when you called there by the highway it sped to do your bidding."

Louima looked not ill-pleased, but she lifted a disdainful shoulder.

"Do they teach speechmaking on board a hunting ship?" she asked, laughing at him with lid-shaded eyes. "A score of days ago you knew not a soft word to give me for the asking, and now I warrant you might even tell a story, and show me, in the telling, the purple sails puffed with the northbound winds, the life and color of the ship, the play of archers, the chase and conquest of the river beasts, and, mayhap, a contest when two of the great lizards strove together and lashed the waters and well nigh overturned your galley in their strength. Come, tell me the tale!"

She clasped her hands expectantly, but Joseph answered:

“I know not of such happenings.”

“Did you not hunt the crocodile?” she demanded.

“Yes, with spears; but there was naught of contest. It was his to hide in reeds and tremble in dark shallows, and ours to find and kill. Then when the Nile was red with blood we turned back for the festival.”

“You liked not the sport?” questioned the girl; and the lad answered:

“I would save my skill for a more equal warfare. But of that my captain pledges me full measure. To-morrow we set out for Edom, for the rock cities have sent no tribute to this Pharaoh, and I shall learn soldier craft and forget the flocks and fields.”

Louimma’s quick sympathy caught the faint quiver in the boyish voice, and after a moment of silence she said gently:

“Speak to me of the ones you left in the tents beyond the river. What of your mother?”

"She is dead," Joseph answered.

"And your father? Is he handsome, and brave, and loving like mine?"

"He is old and sorrowful," the boy replied with emotion, "and even now he is weeping for me in Hebron; for my brothers doubtless told him I was dead."

"Wicked, cruel men!" cried the Arab's daughter. "Why did they use you so despitefully?"

"Because my father loved me best of all his sons."

"That was, in truth, most wrong," said Louimma judicially. "If my father loved another better than he loved me, her would I put in a pit. But why found you so much favor in his sight?"

"He loved my mother better than his other wives."

"And had other wives than one?"

"Yes."

Louimma tossed her head.

"I like not your Hebrew ways," she said coldly. "But tell me, what was her name?"

"Rachel," said the boy softly. "And in the vale of Haran, when morning was scattered on the mountains, he saw her first as she led to the well her flocks. Oft have I heard him tell that she was beautiful, but I knew not what he meant until I looked on you."

Louimma caught and pulled a lotus blossom from the waters and tossed it with pretty playfulness to the boy.

"Thus do Egyptians reward their flatterers," she laughed. "But what said he when he met her at the well?"

"I know not," said Joseph, catching the flower and turning his eyes from the sweeter one that smiled upon him. "But he rolled the mouthstone from the well and let the sheep in to drink, and then—she was his kinswoman, and he kissed her."

Silence fell upon them. The boy took up the oars and sent the little boat swiftly over the waters. The yellow moon swung in the bending sky; a bulbul in the garden began to sing.

"Well," said Louimma, "had never shepherd since a kinswoman?"

His hands trembled on the oars that he had not the boldness to release. A sigh was his only answer.

“Go on,” she said, coldly.

“He loved her even then; and afterwards he served her father Laban seven years that in the end she might be given him. But it was not so. She was the younger, and to fulfill the law it was her sister, Leah, that my father took to wife.”

“The heart of a man is wide,” said Louimma scornfully. “Loved he this Leah, too?”

Joseph resented her tone, and answered moodily:

“Must not a man obey one older than himself, and in authority?”

But Louimma made answer quickly:

“Nay, I think not so. In the tents we have no law but love.”

“Was not this love? My father did not sit and weep. He said to Laban: ‘Lo, I will serve you still another seven years, so I may have the maiden.’”

Louimma counted on her fingers, and exclaimed:

“Twice seven years. Two more than I have numbered in my life. I like not your Hebrew patience!”

And now the galleys returning from the moon-gilded sea began to discharge their passengers at the great wharf, and smaller craft glided to the foot of the temple's steps or waited at the water gates of palaces for the people to go ashore. The Arab chief and Layah disembarked, and the little mother at once began to look about for Louimma; but Aman was unconcerned.

“It is well with the girl,” he said. “I left her in the care of our young lion slayer. But listen, and you will hear her answer to my call, even as I taught her beyond Engannin.”

He walked to the edge of the waters and sent a note like an owl's cry across them. Scarcely had the sound ceased when it was repeated with the exactness of an echo, and in a few moments the little boat came scudding to the quay. Louimma rose to her feet, but

while the papyrus shell rocked under her sudden motion, perilously, Aman caught her in his arms, and Joseph had just time to leap ashore before the boat turned over among the lilies.

“My daughter has more knowledge of the desert ship,” said Aman, smiling at the astonished looks of the young people. “You have but escaped a moonlight bath in Nilus.”

They turned toward the palace of Apepi, Louimma walking with her arm about her mother and Aman striding behind them with the boy; and as they neared the flight of marble steps which led to the carved columns of the great portal, a trumpeter, attended by torch-bearers, came out of the hall and sounded a vigorous note on the instrument he carried. The crowds filling the various streets turned as with one accord and pressed toward the royal building.

“What means that?” questioned Layah, turning around to look at her husband. But the chief answered:

“It is the summons to his army from the

king. The herald will speak when the people are assembled."

Again the note fell upon them. But this time it was to insure silence; and then a soldier, wearing a helmet of gold and a breastplate of the same metal over his tunic of tiger skin, stepped forward with a gesture to command attention.

"Listen! It is my captain," whispered Joseph proudly.

"Know, O people of Mizraim," said the soldier, "that our great king, son of the sun and lord of the double crown, has this day been offended. His subjects in the red hills to the eastward have sent no tribute to his festival—no embassy to join the praise that he has earned from heaven for his goodness. So must his right arm strike. And I, Potiphar, in his name, command the army to be armed and waiting, every man to his own regiment and company, in this place at the hour of dawn. To-morrow night we pitch our camp far in the wilderness."

Joseph laid his hands on the shoulders of the tall chief.

“It is my call to arms, O friend of my heart,” he said. “But when shall I again see you?”

Layah laid her little fingers on his breast.

“In the tents of Kedar, O soldier,” she replied. “We shall look up each time the curtains sway, expecting you to enter.”

“Not so,” said Louimma. “He will never come,” and she turned away. But the boy went over and stood beside her.

“I will come,” he said brokenly. “Louimma, little one——”

A soldier pressed through the throng and called:

“I seek the archer, Dath, of Arabia. His captain desires him to report to him in all speed.”

Joseph dropped the girl’s soft hand and answered eagerly, “I am he.” And followed him without a further word.

CHAPTER XI

Helmets of War

ANOTHER spectacle greeted the eye of the sun when he next shone on Tanis. But the heads bowed to do him homage were covered not with the roses of festival but the helmets of war.

The great public square fronting Pharaoh's palace in the north end of the city was filled with soldiers, and when the sun had risen and the prayers of the priests for victory had been made, the marvellous discipline which made the army of the king feared and respected everywhere began to assert itself. Under the sharp commands of the trumpets the mass of humanity separated but to become compact again, classified into companies, regiments, and battalions, which were no sooner formed than they were moved with dispatch and order to make way for more. The infantry was composed of slingers and wielders

of the club and spear, but the archers were in chariots, while the javelin throwers and swordsmen were mounted on beautiful, well-trained chargers that understood and gloried in the service of the king. Every company bore its standard, and every warrior wore upon his breast his badge of loyalty to Pharaoh—two lions engraved upon a medal and suspended from his neck by a chain.

From his window over the great entrance the king watched the assembly. But when the troops were ready for the march he descended, and with him walked the crown prince, with his young breast swelling under a battle shield. For a moment there was silence among the hosts, then, as the understanding flashed upon them, a mighty cheer arose and every soldier bent the knee, while Mentu, the prince, smiled in boyish enthusiasm and shook back the covered curl which hung at the left side of his head, a token of his youth and inexperience. A stirring note from the trumpet called every ear to hear the

words of Pharaoh, who now stood before them on the top of the flight of marble steps.

The last of the Hyksos kings was at this time a man of forty and in the height of his power and popularity. His military achievements had added much to the possessions of the double kingdoms, and the soldiers who had made his victories possible adored him as the sun—an affection not displeasing to the king, who lacked neither courage nor vanity. In fact, notwithstanding his shepherd origin, he claimed to be the son of the lord of the heavens. He dressed in garments embroidered with the solar disk and wore over his shaven head a wig of enormous size composed of spun gold. On his head was the tall crown of the two Egypts, and the serpent diadem bound the smooth brow of the boy, who was clad in the short garment and mail of a soldier.

The thousands in the street stood waiting; in all the great company not a sword clanked or wheel moved. Even the horses turned their proud heads and asking eyes around toward

the king. Then spoke the ruler, and his voice was heard in all the place :

“Defenders and keepers of Mizraim, I, Apepi, son of the sun and lord of the two kingdoms, make you to-day my treasurers. My first-born goes to fight with you against the insulters of his father ; but he has not felt the shock and roar of battle ; he knows not what it is to see men die——”

The voice of the king faltered and failed, and, as one, the hearts of his troopers trembled. But he rallied and laid his arm around the young shoulders, and looked out somewhat eagerly over the crowd as one who had suddenly gained comfort.

“I have called you my treasurers, O my people,” he continued, “and there are father hearts among you beating in measure with this heart of mine, that you have never known afraid till now. But kings must learn the arts of war as well as other men, and he I hold most dear goes with your troops.” He hesitated, and then called : “I command the youth who slew the lion with his arrow yes-

terday to ride in the chariot with the prince and use his bow as cunningly in his warfare in the time of battle as he used it in the service of my captain, Potiphar, at the festival."

His eyes searched the phalanxed ranks, and in a moment a young man ran out into the open space and saluted silently.

"Are you the lad?" asked Pharoah, bending forward with a keen look at the fair face; and the son of Aman bowed his answer.

"It is well," said the king, with a gesture of dismissal; and as Joseph stepped back among the chariots the trumpeter standing at the monarch's side rang out the stirring signal for the march. There was some necessary manœuvring of the troops to permit the chariots and horsemen to go in advance, and then, line upon line, the foot soldiers followed to the sound of the trumpets and long drums, and the sharp urgings of double pipes and hollow reeds played by the numerous bands.

Tanis occupied the marshy eastern side of the delta near the frontier of Asia, and from there the road of the Philistians led in a

straight line to Palusiam and the south of Palestine, edging for a little distance on one side the Mediterranean and leaving to the right the lofty fortress rock El-Arish, on the waterless river of Egypt.

There were no women or children to line the highway with farewells. The king forbade the custom lest the tears of women should make cowards of his generals. But many casements stirred when the army passed beneath them, and once, as it rumbled by the high priest's house, into the golden chariot of the king's son fell a rose. The prince caught and kissed it, and Joseph saw his cheek grow red and pale. But his own name was softly called just then, and out from a lattice waved a little sun-stained hand. He turned from the prince's rose to the hidden one above him. He felt her sway toward him, but he could not see.

"Louimma," he breathed. "Louimma, we shall meet in Kedar's tents."

"No"—the word came with a sob—"you will not come."

The chariot moved on, and the eyes of the prince and the shepherd met in sympathy.

Aman, the Arab, stood at the end of the avenue of winged sphinxes which marked the limits of the city; a tall and magnificent figure in his gracefully adjusted mantle of striped scarlet and yellow and his snow-white turban. As the royal chariot approached he leaned forward eagerly, and Mentu said:

"Who is that man? A king of some of the eastern provinces, I wager you, sir archer."

"A chief, O prince," Joseph answered. "Lord of Arabia and her hearts and hoofs. I would speak with him."

He sprung from the chariot and into the chief's embrace, and for a moment neither spoke. Then the Arab said:

"Go, my son. Princes do not wait with patience. But know you whom you go to fight against? I thought not. Then listen to me, and when in Edom you think to send one of those swift arrows toward the white-haired king, remember that I bade you keep it in its sheath. For he is Esau, and his sorrows have been not different from your own."

“My uncle?” Joseph questioned breathlessly.

“Yes. To-morrow I go back to Gilead, but I shall have a son in the fields of war to give my name new honors. You will not forget that—nor shall I.”

He gave the boy a long look and a quick embrace, and Joseph ran back and leaped into the chariot.

“I remember now,” said the prince. “It was he who stood with you at the galley’s side when you went with my hunting company down the river. He is your father. No marvel that you spoke so proudly of his countless spears.”

“He is the greatest bowman in the desert and beyond it, and yet a man of peace. But even as the tigers and the horned horses of the river tremble before him, so would his enemies; for at his call the sand would spring to life, each little separate grain a soldier, and the thunder of his hoofs would shake the world.”

The prince frowned. And the shepherd

saw that his old fault of boasting was likely to get him into new difficulties. But he was not a courtier, and could but keep silence.

The prince drew his mantle across his breast with the royal gesture of displeasure, but suddenly his look changed, for the dewy petals of a rose had touched his fingers. He drew the flower from his breastplate and laid it in the hollow of his hand.

“You saw it when it fell, O archer?” he questioned.

Joseph bowed in answer.

“But I warrant you saw not the hand that tossed it in my chariot, or even dreamed of so much tenderness as veiled the eyes that saw me ride to my first conquests. Hear me, Dath of Arabia. If I make mighty war against these foes and plant the standard of the hawk in Sela, I will stand before my lord the king and say: ‘Give me the maid for my reward, for there is naught else in all your kingdom that I covet.’”

“And will not Pharaoh grant your prayer without the price of battles?” asked Joseph.

The prince bent toward his questioner and spoke low.

“To-night will I tell you the story. Between the tremble of my heart and the jolting of the chariot one word might leap as far as the ears of a spy. But I like you well, and will have none other with me in my pavilion. Moreover, I shall gain some comfort from you; for, if I mistook not, I heard another whisper from a casement as we passed that was not meant for me.”

Leaving Egypt with considerable force, the king's army was able to make good time across the corner of Philistia and eastward toward the enemies' country, which lay south of the Dead Sea and to the north of the gulf of Akaba. Two days' travel brought the mounted troops and the chariots up to the shelter of the first jagged range of limestone hills, which edged the desert of Shur and stood like a wall broken by narrow ravines between the army and the unconscious Edomites.

The sound of the battle-cars and horses

had been muffled by the soft sand, and the approach of the Egyptians was wholly unnoticed by the people of Sela. So the first arrivals went into camp under the hills, and by sunset a city of bright pavilions was ready for the officers and horses. A few adventurers, impatient for the battle morning, threaded the ravines and spied upon the city; but these were not acting under orders, and their depredations and punishments alike fell on their own heads. For the most part the camp was in perfect order, and when the first soft darkness fell Joseph was in the young prince's tent.

The pavilion arranged for Pharaoh's son was an ample room with walls of silk covered with a canopy of the imperial purple and furnished with articles brought in a cart drawn by white oxen from the capital. The tent-dweller was amazed to see the cumbersome furniture of the apartment, but he refrained from speaking of it, for he saw his royal host was impatient to begin his confidence.

"Sit here," said the prince, pointing to a low divan, "and tell me have you ever loved a maid?"

For a moment Joseph could make no answer. Then something unspoken and unguessed before rose from his heart to his lips, and left upon them the single whisper, "Yes."

"That thought I," said the other boy, with every evidence of satisfaction. But Joseph did not hear. His pulses trampled like wild steeds, freed by the word he had uttered.

"That is why I shall tell you. For a man must speak his thoughts to some one, and my father will not listen and my mother weeps at the first word I say of Asenath."

"But she, will she not hear?" Joseph asked.

"She has not yet. But that is the way of maids," answered the prince. "Besides, they have shut her in an upper chamber, and she cannot see me or even send a message by a slave. That is the fault I find with kingliness—one cannot have his own way. But once I win a victory I will say: 'Give me the maid to wife, for I will have no other; and I will have her with my crown if may be, but without it if I must.'"

"So would I do, too," replied the shepherd,

with sudden conviction. "But why should the king, your father, deny you what you want? Is the maid not beautiful?"

"As the morning."

"And good?"

"But for her the altars of the sun might grow cold. She and her maidens attend the fires and heap them with incense. Her father is the high priest of Mizraim. A holy man, but with not so much liking as he should have for his prince. But speak and tell me, why should the matter trouble the king or the priest, O son of the desert, if it pleases me?"

Joseph was about to reply, when there was a sudden sound of commotion in the camp, and with one impulse the two young men rushed to the curtains and drew them aside. The night had grown suddenly dark and they could see nothing; but they heard flying hoofs, hoarse laughter, and the clank of mail.

CHAPTER XII

The End of the Torch Race

OF all the houses built in honor of the sun, not one he shone upon was greater than the temple made at Sela. For the builders, disdaining the walls reared by man, hollowed out a mountain for their place of worship and set beneath its carved and fluted columns altars of gold emblazoned with the solar disk and furnished with sacred vessels of surpassing splendor. The ground space of this temple was a square of three hundred and three feet each way, and from the lowest depression in the floor to the apex of the copper-framed glass dome it was exactly the same in height.

This was the heart of the city; but the dwellings were constructed in like manner, and instead of bringing blocks of granite from the quarries the people honeycombed the sandstone of the hills and hewed palaces and

theatres out of the solid rock. Mount Seir was their fortress and town. Its back to the Dead Sea and frowning front toward Mizraim; and its approaches were defended by walls of masonry of tremendous strength and thickness, beyond which a tract of considerable extent was reclaimed from the desert and converted into pleasure grounds. For the cliff-dwelling subjects of Prince Esau delighted in athletic contests and prowess in arms. Their fortified towns were not suited to chariot races and running horses, but the edge of the wilderness nearest them was smoothed for these purposes, and while Tanis was celebrating the erection of the seventh obelisk, Sela was indulging in games of skill and contests of strength and swiftness—contests in which the men, women, and children had equal share. And while men raced horses brought from Asia, little boys yoked mice to tiny battle-cars and wagered them against their fellows doughtily. Young girls equalled their brothers in feats of endurance and agility, and a portion of each day's enter-

tainment was given over to them. In the morning they played ball, the victor mounted on the back of her unfortunate companion who had made a bad throw or failed to catch the sphere as it was thrown toward her, or otherwise made herself subject to a forfeit. It was an amusing spectacle to see one of the pretty, active players bow down on her hands and knees to be a horse for the one who had distanced her in the game, and the people always greeted it with shouts of laughter, which turned against the mounted maiden if her steed succeeded in throwing her off. These girls were fairer than the Egyptians, and many had light hair which fell in great lengths over the petticoats of richly-dyed linen which they wore.

The final day of the tournament closed with a woman torch-race on horseback.

It was nearly evening when a score of the young princesses and ladies of Edom came down the hewn steps in the side of the mountain attired in flowing garments of white and attended by their black slave women; and as the

little procession reached the lower gates they were met by their horses—each steed as white as the snows of distant Hermon and caparisoned with tassels and ornaments of glistening stones and cloths of gold and silver. These beautiful Arabians were the pride of the old prince, and only left his stables on occasions of unusual splendor; and the Nubians who now held them strove hard to keep them in check until the light, well-trained hands of their riders should subdue and guide them. One by one they were led rearing and cavorting to the place where each girl, catching at once at mane and saddle-horn, leaped up and rode as a lotus rides a crested storm-wave in the saltless sea—neither yielding nor opposing, but conforming to its humor until it changes and becomes calm.

Rhoda, the granddaughter of the old prince, sat her horse with the lightness of thistle-down. She was fairer than all the maids of Edom, and her tawny hair, bound by a narrow band of gold, hung to the pink-soled, unshod feet that caressed the sides of the charger.

Her left hand held the reins; and when the maidens were all mounted and ready, the slaves ran up with slender silver torches, which blossomed into lilies of flame. The princess caught hers and held it aloft, and the others followed her example as they ranged their horses in a line and held them neck and neck, waiting the signal for the start.

The course was an oblong track two miles in circumference, in the centre of which was a grove of palms and acacia trees and various plants and flowering shrubs brought from a more fertile region. This wooded spot, kept in eternal bloom by its artificial pools and fountains, had one serious defect—it completely obscured the western side of the racecourse from the spectators, and they were not able to follow their favorites but two-thirds of the way around. Farther to the west and north of this constructed road sharp crags of limestone rose like a bulwark to the wilderness that stretched to the not distant Nile.

The night was fair and soft, and trembling into a dusk so faint that the torches shone but

palely yellow. From the tower above the gate a trumpet blew, and a master of the sports came forth to announce the character of the race and its prize—the last to be a bridle-rein of pearls for the first rider to strike her torch, aflame, on the gate of the city after making the circuit of the course. The difficulty was in keeping the light burning during its swift journey through the air, and not a few of the girls made the start but to return with their torches extinguished, when at last the trumpet sounded the stirring signal for the run.

The spectators filling the space between the walls and the road and dotting the sides of the mountain made eager wagers with each other on the result of the contest.

“My strongest slave against your weakest one, O friend,” said a citizen to his fellow, “that the lady Rhoda rides first with her plume of fire to the goal.”

“I will make no wager on the maid,” cried a young man, laughing; “for if the wind blows out her torch she has but to light it with her hair.”

“But see the little one from Reuel’s household,” said another. “She has a cunning trick in holding hers to elude the breeze. I warrant she will fly at the head of the white flock homeward.”

It was a brilliant, colorful multitude which watched the contests from the eastern side of the pleasure ground below the mountain-built palaces of Sela. Esau, the ruler of the whole country of Edom, occupied a throne carved in the solid rock of the hillside, and he was surrounded by the officers of his court and the women of the viceregal household. The latter were dressed in silks of purple and rose color, elaborately embroidered and falling from shoulder-clasps to feet in the graceful fashion of the time. The men wore short tunics of linen and the soldiers were distinguished by the round shields of silver-studded oxhide and curious helmets of copper set with branching horns on each side of their foreheads. Some of these warriors carried their spears and battle-clubs in their hands; but for the most part they were unarmed and in holi-

day humor. Esau, the brother of Jacob, was an old man now, but he was ever interested in the pleasures of his people, and as he watched the games the keen eyes under his shaggy white brows sparkled merrily.

At the first note of the trumpet the horses swept between the thousands who cheered them, and with superb freedom in every movement swung into the course. There was at the start the usual flutter of uncertainty among the riders. Some of the torches flared and went out, and as the maidens who had carried them turned back out of the running the steeds closed ranks with the precision of troopers, neither swerving or hesitating, but keeping gallantly in place. The judges' stand faced the exact centre of the eastern side of the oblong and marked the beginning of the race-course, and the girls rode to the north until, with gradually increasing speed, they swept around the curve and down the western side, and were soon lost to sight behind the grove which lay between them and their observers. Singly and by twos and threes the maidens

whose torches had been extinguished by the rush rode back amid the good-natured raillery of the people, until but three remained of the score who had entered the contest, and for their appearance all eyes were turned expectantly toward the southern end of the race-course. The amber dusk had changed and deepened, and now the stars and the torches put on new and sudden brilliance. The betting ceased in the field, and up in the pavilion the judges bent forward with smiling and eager interest as the rhythmic beat of the hoofs of the steeds came up from the farther track. The people stopped laughing and listened, and men swung their children to their shoulders to give them first sight of the torches as they would sweep down the home-stretch. Every ear was strained to hear the music of voice and the rhyme of hoof; every eye to catch the glimpse of the oncoming lights and the flutter of white garments in the purple darkness; every throat ached with imprisoned cheers.

Then there was a sudden, bewildering

clatter and clang of mailed hoofs among the soft-falling feet of the desert horses; a woman's shrill cry borne high above the grove of dancing; and after that silence, followed by the mad gallop of a single horse, nearer, nearer, and more near, until around the curve at wild speed, torchless, clinging to her charger's neck, and with unbound hair streaming and snapping in the breeze, came Mirza, daughter of Reuel, crying with white lips:

“The Egyptians! The Egyptians are upon us!”

For a moment following the breathless cry there was silence, while the girl lay trembling on her horse's neck. Then a woman caught up her child and ran for the gates, and immediately the multitude, crowding, struggling, and half wild with terror, rushed for the same refuge. But before the women and children had been trampled under the feet of their panic-stricken companions, a golden-throated trumpet commanded attention, and from his throne

on the wall the old prince arose and stood among his light-bearers.

“Shame, O my people!” he called sternly. “Have I nourished cowards in my hills to flee at the name of Egypt? Let all the armed men fall to the rear and guard the others, who may come quietly and without haste into the city. And I, Esau, warn you, if any man seeks his own safety at cost of his neighbor, or in any way hinders or overthrows the aged or weak, let him seek mercy from the Egyptians rather than from me. Now, to your homes; my generals will meet me in the council chamber, that Edom may be ready for to-morrow’s battle.”

Even as he spoke the confusion ceased, and the soldiers and others who wore arms made their way to the outer edge of the grounds and formed into an orderly line behind the assembly. And in a few moments the crowd, moving slowly and without fear, passed into the great gates.

Reuel had been first to reach the girl when her panting steed stopped by the stand of the

judges; and he caught her to his breast and held her for a moment without a word. Then he said:

“Speak, little one; your father’s arms are about you. What of the Princess Rhoda and Elma, the daughter of Omar?”

“They are captives in the camp of Pharaoh’s soldiers,” she answered, raising her head. “Half way around the course behind the trees in the grove of dancing, they rode from a ravine and surrounded us before we heard so much as the fall of a hoof. One soldier caught my bridle, but I struck him full across his eyes with my blazing torch, and as he reeled and loosed his hold this brave horse broke away and brought me here. I thought at first they followed me, but the sound was only the gallop of my heart. They laughed and rode back to the desert.”

Reuel’s brow was anxious as he gave his daughter into the care of her women and hurried to his place in the council. On his way he heard the wails of the captives’ mothers, who had gone to the tower above the gate to strain

their eyes toward the hostile camp. He called up to them as he passed—some word of comfort and good cheer—and ran on to the rock-hewn wall of assembly, where the prince was already conferring with his ministers.

Both besiegers and besieged were sun worshippers, and there would be no attack before day. But the temper of the people had been roused to fury by the capture of the maidens, and the archers of Mizraim were promised stern greeting when once their scaling ladders touched the wall.

Omar, the father of the little Elma, entered the room and burst through the circle of counsellors to address the prince.

He was a tall man with bowed shoulders; the chief potter and image maker of all Edom; but now his eyes were wild and his shaggy locks tossed like a lion's mane.

"Let a wrong of the night be revenged in the night, O prince," he cried, lifting his long arms toward the sky. "Let the army strike now and our Lord Sun will rise to see our victory."

“So be it, O Esau,” cried a number of voices in chorus. And one after another of the men of the city pushed his way in and added to the clamor; but Esau rose in his place and stood in majestic patience before them until something in his look made them still. Then he stretched his hands outward in a gesture of dismissal.

“Have I so great a need of counsellors that you come to me now?” he asked. “A father spoke in Omar’s froward tongue and I forgave him. But take your petitions to the temples and make your speeches from the walls to-morrow with your spears. Go, men of Sela, to the altars of the Sun!”

He turned to his ministers, and the citizens quietly left the place and joined the excited crowds, climbing the precipitous streets toward the temple. Omar strode ahead, his great hands hanging helpless by his sides.

CHAPTER XIII

A Princess of Sela

THE camp of the Egyptians had been speedily reduced to order, and a vast area of the plain of Shur was dotted with tents. For Apepi took excellent care of his soldiers, and provided every man a covering to protect him from the mischievous glances of the moon. It was a matter of tradition that the army of Timæus, a former king, had been bewitched strangely by the goddess of the night; and every man who had slept with his face uncovered had arisen in the morning with drawn and wrinkled cheeks and dazed brain, which made him unfit for warfare. The generous and thoughtful provision for their comfort and welfare on the part of Pharaoh made his army adore him, and it is not improbable that many of his victories may be laid to that account. There was not, in all that great host, a spearman or a wielder of

the battle-ax or sword or bow who would not have turned his weapon to his own heart at the king's command, and die blessing the lips that condemned him. Now, on the eve of battle, the soldiers strolled along the narrow streets between the little tents or gathered in small groups in one of the larger pavilions, where they played draughts or engaged in feats of strength and agility. In some places they were telling stories. But their laughter was subdued, and there was no sound of instruments or song to be carried over the intervening hills to the city that dawn would see besieged.

When the two young men in the royal tent had been interrupted in their confidences by the returning troopers, the prince halted a soldier whose curiosity had swift feet, and said:

“What means this clamor in the camp?”

“There are prisoners, your highness,” answered the man, reluctantly slackening his speed. “A scouting party has just come in from the hills eastward.”

The boy glanced at his companion in uncertainty. He was unskilled in the craft of war, but he had been a prince all his days. Surely in so grave a case as this something must be required of him. He could gain no hint from his companion's face as to what the thing might be, so he said, with a show of more certainty than he was able to feel:

"Report to my captain, and tell him I desire the prisoners brought here."

The man saluted and ran away; and Mentu turned to Joseph in his perplexity.

"Tell me, O archer," he said. "If you were a prince and had to deal with prisoners, what would you say?"

"In truth I know not," replied the youth; and then they looked at each other and laughed boyishly. Whereupon Joseph continued:

"But I think I should let them go free. It is not pleasant to be a prisoner."

"But a prince must be severe and punish," persisted the king's son, a frown gathering under the serpent diadem on his brow. "I

shall not let them go free. I shall take them back to Tanis in their chains."

A soldier entered.

"The prisoners are here, your highness," he said; and at the words the purple drapery of the entrance parted and fell again behind the slender, white-clad figures of two maidens—Rhoda, the princess of Sela, and her attendant, Elma, the daughter of Omar.

For a second the prince stared at the beautiful young face of the taller girl with speechless amazement, and the shepherd felt no less surprise. But the maid found her tongue first—after the manner of maids everywhere—and her great eyes flashed as she cried:

"Shame on you for unmannerly Egyptians! Have you no men to fight with men by day that you steal maids from their protectors?"

Mentu stood before her blushing and stammering; but he managed to say with an attempt at dignity:

"Peace, girl! I know not who you are."

"Nor have I a mind to tell you, boy," she responded. "But speak, and say who leads

this army. I would have speech with him."

She swept across the pavilion and took the prince's seat upon the dais. Her bare, pink-soled feet sank in the velvet carpet like lilies in a bed of moss, and the wonderful copper-colored hair fell in a veil around her. Once seated, she leaned back luxuriously and motioned Elma to a low place at her feet.

Joseph, who had been watching the prince's changing expressions with amusement, now went behind him and whispered:

"Shall you take your prisoners bound to Tanis, O son of Pharaoh?"

And the young man answered seriously:

"Nay, not so. The maid knows little of the ways of war, and I doubt not the chains would bruise her little hands. Perhaps it will be best to let them go. See there, she smiles."

Rhoda was indeed looking well pleased with her surroundings, and as her eyes swept around the place and discovered the gorgeous wall drapery hung with the golden armor, the camp outfit of precious wares and floor coverings of finest velvet bordered about with pearls, she said:

“ I little thought a soldier would be so softly housed. Our fighting men have but a tent of stars above their heads at night. Now look you, boy, I will stay here until you fetch our horses to the door; and if you haste and get us safely home within an hour’s time, I promise that I will turn great Esau’s wrath before it falls on you.”

Joseph saw the bewilderment of the prince, and stepped forward.

“ Know you not, O maid of Sela,” he said, with a gesture of deference toward the other lad, “ this is your prince, son of Pharaoh and lord of all Egypt? ”

She made a pretty gesture of surprise and put out her hand toward him.

“ Then must I forgive him that he is so poor a soldier,” she said. “ But you mistake somewhat, good archer, when you say he is my prince; for mine is Esau, and his beard and hair are like the snows of Hermon.”

And then, to the surprise of Joseph, the prince of Egypt went forward with a laugh and kissed her hand.

“You are a daughter of the Sun, O red-haired maiden,” he exclaimed. “And I, who am, as he has said, but Pharaoh’s son, dare not detain you. The horses shall be called, and we shall be your escort.”

He motioned to Joseph, still laughing, and the Hebrew went out to give directions to the groom to bring the steeds up to the tent. As he returned he met Potiphar just coming from between the entrance curtains.

The captain was smiling broadly, and he detained the young archer to whisper:

“Forget not the commands of Pharaoh to keep his son from all the darts of Edom. If I mistake not, the first have struck him even now. What else could make him bent on such an expedition?”

“The prince has felt no dart, O captain,” cried Joseph, wondering at his superior officer’s words; and a trifle frightened lest some treachery had found his lord in his brief absence. “He is quite safe and well, and talking with a maiden in the tent. I go with him in but a moment’s time to take her, in all safety, back to Sela.”

The captain laughed outright at his earnestness.

“You bend your bow far better than your mind, O archer,” he said. “Else had the king slight cause to trust his treasure with you. The dart I meant sprang from a maiden’s eyes. As for your plan to take them to their gates, its foolishness may move the gods to save you.”

He shrugged his shoulders and strode away, and Joseph entered to hear a girlish voice exclaim indignantly:

“And so you mean to take our tribute on your arrow points?” And the prince replied stoutly:

“For that have I brought here ten thousand warriors.”

There was a pause, while the two looked into each other’s eyes imperiously. Then the girl replied:

“I would, O son of Egypt’s king, that you had brought thrice that number. But come. We should be setting forth. Since I have met such kindness at your hands, ’tis meet that I

should set my women to the task of making poultices from violet leaves to bind your warriors' wounds to-morrow morning."

She rose as she spoke, and the horses were heard approaching. Elma turned to Joseph with a knowing smile.

"When she speaks thus," she said with pride, "Esau himself cannot gainsay her. So tell your young lord there."

"What can she do to work her will?" asked Joseph skeptically. "She is naught but a maid."

"Do? She can grow angry."

"And what of that? There is no danger in a woman's wrath."

Elma lifted a warning finger before his eyes.

"That," she said scornfully, "is the speech of one who has much knowledge to obtain. But come; 'tis time to go if you would return before the hour of battle."

The steeds stood at the door, and as the curtains were drawn backward, disclosing the girls to their view, they whinnied joyfully.

By order of the captain every man was in

his tent and the camp quiet at the time of the departure of the prince on his extraordinary mission to the gates of the enemy's city, and so the four set out with no curious eyes to watch them. Rhoda leaped to her horse's back from the prince's hand, and he seemed disposed to keep his place beside her when he had mounted; while Joseph, alive to the delight of the strange experience, rode beside Elma; and they swept through the ravine and out on the ribbon-like track which bounded the pleasure garden, as joyously as though it had all been a part of the programme of the festival. The horses were in fine spirits and their riders young and merry, and in a few moments the grove had been passed and the turn of the road made toward the city. The moon's silver lamp swung low in the soft, black sky, and there was no sound save the rhythmic beat of hoofs; no sight but frowning walls and towers of massive masonry. But as the curve was passed, and the figures of the riders became visible on the road, a cry rose suddenly from the house above the gate—a

cry followed by another full of rapture and thanksgiving.

“Our mothers have seen us returning,” said Rhoda, glancing up and waving her hand to the tower; and they urged their horses forward.

“Peace be with you, and safety, O maid of Sela,” said Mentu, wheeling his horse about. “I would I might keep to-morrow’s arrows from your household.”

He signalled to Joseph to start for the camp, but the girl with a quick movement laid her hand on his bridle.

“A little farther, O prince,” she said, smiling. “We are not yet at the gates, and there are panthers and other wild things near.”

So he turned again and rode close to her side up to the judges’ stand; and then, suddenly, an unseen portal swung at its side and a company of soldiers swept out and surrounded them.

“Thus were we surprised to-day, O son of Pharaoh,” cried Rhoda, who had recognized the intention of the soldiers. And then pro-

testing, and wholly unprepared for such a termination to the evening, the two young men were hurried into the city. From the gate which clanged heavily after them to the beginning of the ascent into the rock-built town was but a hundred feet, and as Rhoda began to climb upward she looked back, and her triumph ran over in a girlish laugh as she cried, in remembrance of what she had heard in the invader's camp:

“Forward, archers of Sela, to the prince with my prisoners.”

CHAPTER XIV

Trumpets of Battle

A MAZED and chagrined at what to older soldiers must have seemed the inevitable result of their expedition, the prince and Joseph were hurried along through tortuous ways which led ever upward until they came to a rock so massive and towering that it seemed a distinct spur of the mountain. Here they paused, for the cliff rose to a height of five hundred feet and formed a wall across the path. But even as they looked at the apparently impenetrable surface, a huge block of stone swung suddenly inward, forming a door to a circular chamber of considerable size and height immeasurable; for the stairs were cut in a gradually ascending spiral around the sides, and were lost in the blackness of the upper region. So far the march had been conducted without speech, and it seemed to both the boys that it was all

a part of some curious dream. Their escort, which at the moment of their capture had been a complete company of a hundred soldiers, had drifted away—small detachments at a time—until only a half-dozen remained and entered the citadel with the prisoners. These warriors wore short garments of ox-hides and breastplates of beautifully ornamented copper. Their helmets were of the same metal, but formed of chains sufficiently open to give ventilation to the abundant locks of bristling red hair which hung to their shoulders—for the distinguishing mark of the Edomites was the color of their hair, and they considered it a special sign of their kinship with the sun. They also wore, in honor of the moon, two slender horns above their brows, and these were polished and decorated with tassels. The upper parts of their feet were covered with sandals of soft leather, which were caught with rings over their toes, leaving the soles of the feet free to climb and hold the rocks. And so well trained had they become that the

Edom mountaineer could creep up a wall as easily as a fly scales a window.

At the entrance of the place the prince, who had walked unresisting along the entire way, suddenly raised his head.

“I am Mentu, son of Pharaoh and lord of the upper and lower country,” he said. “I am also a prisoner, and I know not your ways in war, but I would send a message to your prince and ask him, in all courtesy, to set us free.”

A guard stepped forward and saluted respectfully.

“Esau is with his ministers, O prince of Egypt; and it is his law that no one shall seek his presence till the dawn. Rest then with your companion for the night, in such rude comfort as a fortress offers; and in the morning Esau will do homage to his guest.”

“But it will be the battle morning,” cried the boy, “and I shall not be there to lead my warriors. Let me go hence, O soldier of the hills. Let me go hence, that Pharaoh be not shamed before his army.”

“’Twere better to shame Pharaoh than anger Esau,” observed the trooper. Then pointing to a stairway, he continued: “Let me conduct your highness to your chamber.”

The young Egyptian looked at Joseph in dismay, but at a nod from the latter moved on without further protest or entreaty. The steps before referred to were cut deeply enough into the wall to admit of two men ascending them abreast, and to the relief of the boys, who looked at them with dizziness and apprehension, a soldier walked by either one, on the outside, treading the railless spiral as it led up and up around the circle of the room as calmly as though it were an ordinary road. Even from their places, pressed close against the inner side, the boys had difficulty to keep from falling. Twice the prince swayed against the sturdy form of the soldier, and Joseph cringed and hugged the wall as they wound slowly up and around. Below, in the black pit that seemed to yawn to engulf him, he could see the torches flare and gleam, but above was utter darkness. His

head throbbed and he shut his eyes and stumbled upward for a distance and a time interminable. Then at last, as he raised his foot mechanically for another step, it sank back on the same level; and he opened his eyes to discover that he was standing with his companions on a broad platform looking into a room of remarkable extent and beauty. At a motion from the prince he followed him into the apartment, and the guards saluted and withdrew. Then the limbs of the two young men fairly gave way under them, and they sank trembling to the floor. It was several moments before either one could speak, and then the Egyptian said regretfully:

“I knew not that the shape of fear walked with me until I felt my way along those stairs to-night. But I swear to you, that rather than to go down them I will remain a prisoner of Esau’s all my days.”

“That said I, too,” said Joseph, “on the way hither. But now I promise you I would not let them keep me from my freedom if it were day. But look,” he continued, spring-

ing up, "this chamber of the stars is made for worship, if I mistake not. This window must be north, for Vega shines herein, and every one enshrines some constellation for a space as it moves through the heavens."

The room was indeed the tower of astrology. The floor, which was of blue stone, was inlaid with the solar disk with rays of solid gold; and innumerable stars and the signs of the zodiac were portrayed in silver. Save for a pavilion in the centre which afforded a covering for a couch, the place was open to the sky. Outside of this pavilion the furniture was of the plainest description, but within were luxurious cushions and soft carpets and the purple hangings of royalty. The young prince threw himself down upon the pillows with a boyish frown.

"Know you not, O archer," he said, "that a maid is at the root of every trouble? Here are we prisoners within the walls instead of making siege without them; and all because a maid has copper-colored hair and feet like buds of lotus in the Nile. I would that I

might see the girl and heap red anger on her ruddy locks for all that she has brought upon me."

"I doubt not," answered Joseph, "that your bowmen will avenge your capture when they storm the gates. An hour since their arms were strong for duty; what will they not be for love? The walls may be a useless pile of stones this time to-morrow evening and all the pride of Sela trampled low."

But the prince uncomforted, said:

"Peace, desert wanderer! Do you think the little maid could bear the fright and shock of falling walls? Who knows what evil arrow may not pierce her as she flies before my headless army? If I were there, be sure it would not be so."

Joseph stretched his arms wide and yawned, and the prince immediately followed him, exclaiming angrily as the convulsion ceased:

"As prince of Egypt, I should be the first to yawn. See to it that you set no fashion after this. Stop, I command you!"

But the Hebrew, after a vain struggle,

yielded again to the spasm and opened his mouth till every shining tooth was revealed; while, battling with his rage, the son of Pharaoh imitated him.

“I meant not so,” Joseph began apologetically, and then another yawn stopped the words, and the prince’s threat was halted by a prodigious gape, which seemed likely to rend his jaws asunder, and in spite of his most just and princely anger the hysteria continued until Mentu dropped back upon the cushions and fell asleep, and the archer, stretching his lithe young body on the floor, gave himself up to slumber.

While they yet slept a trumpet note sought the ear of the prince, and finding it closed went on to the shepherd. Joseph sprang to his feet to see the pale stars in a sky already claimed by dawn, and to hear the deep-toned song of battle borne upward to him from the city:

“Come up, ye horses of Pharaoh, and eat of the grass of sorrow.

Sing, all ye arrows of Egypt; vain is your flight, vain your singing.”

For a moment he listened, dazed, and then rushed to the window which opened to the west. Directly below the very streets seemed moving, so closely were they filled with compact ranks of marching men; for the main thoroughfare from the temple to the gate was intersected by all the narrower roads, and presented, from the height, the appearance of a huge, uncouth monster swarming between the cliffs on its way to the wall. Joseph saw that this monster was made up of fighting men—foot-soldiers, without exception, for the topography of the capital did not admit the use of cavalry inside, and the Edomites preferred to ride their elephants outside the walls. The infantry differed in few respects from the opposing hosts of Pharaoh, and it was evident from their manœuvres that their leaders followed the tactics of the great king. But one company alone preceded the bowmen, and Joseph in surprise bent over and strained his eyes to ascertain what manner of warriors they were. Apparently dwarfs, with tremendous breadth of shoulder and length of

arm, they walked with a peculiar lope much different from the military movement of the others. But it was not until they reached the wall and sprang suddenly upon it that he recognized their place among the regiments. They were the stone-throwing apes, and the terror of their deeds had gone out even to the tents of Canaan. He turned around with a shudder and met the eyes of the prince, who had come up behind him and was looking on with like aversion and horror.

“I knew not that we came to fight with beasts,” he said. Then with a cry of utter helplessness, added: “Oh, that I were there to lead my army. I cannot stay here like a hawk in a cage and see them fight without me. Look, but now I caught a gleam of chariots beyond yon lowest hills. Saw you not the same? ’Twas behind the grove of dancing that we passed last night. See! Potiphar at last; and all our battle-cars are following!”

He strained his eyes toward the sight, and Joseph saw the tears upon his cheeks as he cried:

“Mizraim! Mizraim!”

From their place high up above the town the whole scene was plainly visible and the invaders and defenders in full view. Directly in front of the gates was the pleasure ground, but yesterday the field of sports and peaceful contests; beyond that the wooded grove, and farther still the hills which hemmed the desert. The vast camp of Egypt was huddled close under the shelter of these hills, or it would have been discovered, doubtless, by the sentinels whose duties led them to this very tower. The fact that the approach of the army was unobserved was probably due to the keen interest felt by every citizen of Sela in the games—a circumstance which excused the guards when the matter came up later for investigation. But now the two lads watched the advance of the well-disciplined troops with intense interest as they emerged boldly from the camp, and with the sound of singing and the wail of double pipes and long drums marched on to meet the enemy. An unseen enemy as yet, intrenched behind the double

fosses which surrounded their walls, and seemingly unassailable from any point outside the fortifications.

Steadily the Egyptians poured out of the *wadis* in the hills—a brilliant, unending stream of shining chariots, richly caparisoned horses, and men clothed in linen tunics and leopard skins, plumed and armored for war. The boys watched the formation of the troops with absorbed interest, as quietly and with unwavering precision the complex mass resolved itself into distinct and compact companies. Flanked by the chariots, the phalanxes were arranged upon the field according to their order. The slingers, spearsmen, and swordsmen in the forward ranks and the archers following. Apepi had proved his strategy in this order of precedence; for the men who fought hand to hand with their adversaries were able safely to advance to their very walls under the arrows that flew from behind them.

Unlike the other foot-soldiers, who were invariably formed into phalanxes, the pike men were arranged in wedge-shaped companies,

with the small end of the wedge toward the city. They occupied a space between the double lines of infantry and in the centre of the field, and a part of their equipment was an immense framework covered with oxhide and supported by four poles, under which the work against the walls might go on without fear of the enemy above them—for it was from the shelter of this unsightly but effectual instrument that the battering rams were directed, and from its top the scaling-ladders were reared.

The son of the king had looked upon the glittering ranks with a pride which flushed his cheeks and set a gleam in his dark eyes. But now he turned to Joseph and said petulantly:

“They seem not to have missed me at the camp. See you in all their looks a sign of woe? By what right go they at their war without me?”

“Such is the way of soldiers, I have heard,” answered Joseph. “What they must do, they do and say no word. But I doubt not each heart that beats beneath the lion badge is filled

with plans to set its great prince free. Hark, some one comes."

One of the guards who had conducted them to the tower on the previous evening came in the door accompanied by a slave bearing food and water. It was now quite light, and the sight of the breakfast made the young prisoners hungry.

"When will the battle begin?" asked the Egyptian, as he partook with keen appetite of the food. And the soldier said:

"Already Esau goes toward the walls. Hark! you are answered."

A trumpet sounded from the battlements, and the boys rushed back to their places of observation, while the guard and his companion sought the stairs. Scarcely had the signal died away when the Edomites swarmed up the inner side of the wall like red ants and fairly hurled themselves down and upon the nearest ranks of the invaders in the open field, fighting at short range under the arrows from both sides. At the signal of the trumpet the archers had drawn in line and discharged

showers of darts on the defenders' front, under cover of which the heavy infantry, armed with spears and clubs and protected by their long shields, moved forward, flanked by battle-cars and cavalry, and pressed toward the centre and wings of the enemy, whose strength it was difficult to estimate—for the Edomites not only issued in orderly companies from the various gates, but poured over the walls and up through subterranean passages, and seemed to attack from every quarter.

For the first half-hour the air was filled with shouts and taunting cries and the sun darkened by arrows. Here, there, and everywhere along the lines men flung themselves upon each other in deadly, hate-filled conflict, hand to hand. The captains leaped from their chariots, and dropping their bows caught up war clubs and two-edged swords and mowed and beat men down along their path of destruction with both hands. And above the shock of shield on shield, the crash of spears, and vibrant clang of steel rose the shrill scream of wounded horses and the hideous

gibbering of the apes that hurled stones of great size among the king's troops, creating disorder and destruction, and presented an appearance of demoniac ferocity as they swung their hairy arms and danced and grimaced on the ramparts.

But owing to their distance from the walls, the Egyptian archers were still able to fret and embarrass the enemy, and under the cover of a flight of arrows, the testudo—the framework covered with hides—was finally run close against the masonry. This engine was large enough to shelter twenty men, and the light troops made ready to mount upon it when the moment was ripe to scale the walls. But now, beneath, the pike men were at work to dislodge the stones and direct the battering-rams against the bulwarks of the city, while the reserve divisions came up on flank and rear to the sound of drums and shouting, only to mix in the wildly-struggling mass and melt away like the ones that had fought before them.

High in their tower the boys watched the

scene with eyes wide with dread. War to them had meant life, strenuous, and full of triumphant glory; but this was death—courage pierced by arrows and trampled by plunging horses. They saw the grass turn red, the sand become a sea of crimson; but even though they fought on heaps of dead the soldiers kept on fighting. Not as men now, but fiends. Not for Pharaoh's tribute, for principle, for revenge, but for the mad joy that comes in battle to hew men down and see them die.

The prince and shepherd caught each other's hands and held on hard.

But now they saw Potiphar cut his way to where the disordered phalanxes still held the field. The Edomites had made a fierce and unexpected onslaught on the left flank of the army and driven one division to retreat, and the garden of dancing was torn and trampled by the hurrying horses. But the captain rallied his own troops for a dash against the wall. For some reason that point was for a moment feebly defended; the eye of the officer saw it,

and he knew that moment—and that alone—was theirs. They gathered for the effort manfully, but just as they were leaping forward at all speed the prince's voices arrested them:

“Look, men of Egypt, here am I!”

Confused, surprised, and thrilled at the familiar tone, they stopped with a shout and looked upward. And by that hesitation the battle and the day was lost; for the Edomites, reinforced, swarmed to the spot and drove the invaders back with terrible slaughter. Potiphar looked to see the pride of Pharaoh flying for the desert, and turned to follow, when, trumpeting with rage and rushing with a tread which shook the ground, the battle elephants, with the old prince on the foremost, closed in upon the rear.

The chief officer of the king stood with his own depleted company alone among the dead; for the rest of the Egyptians had fled, and the Edomites, comprehending the intention of their prince, had withdrawn from the field. He was a brave man and a good soldier, but now as the great beasts came threateningly

toward him he knew that he must choose between capture and death. He drew the sword with which he had fought so gallantly, and placing the point against his breast, would have fallen on it had not Esau cried :

“Not so, O captain. Pharaoh will need your arm and sword on many a battle morning that the stars have promised. But to the city now. I doubt not there are those within of interest to you ; and we shall have some leisure to confer another time.”

The mien of the old man was not unkind, and he made a gesture of courtesy toward the company as the beasts, like a trained cordon of soldiery, still preserved their form of the half circle in which they had advanced, and moved slowly forward ; while the Egyptians walked, perforce, before them into the now open gates of Sela.

CHAPTER XV

The Ruler of the Red Hills

THE rock garrison of Sela was arranged in three lofty rooms, one above the other, and surmounted by the astrological observatory now occupied by the prince and Joseph. The lower and middle rooms had been filled since the battle morning—three days before—with the captured Egyptians, who were now sleeping on their mats upon the floor; for the conquerors of that period had not learned to add cruelty to the sorrows of defeat, and the places for the confinement of prisoners were provided with certain comforts, and had no lack of light and air.

At the first streak of dawn a trooper in the middle apartment stirred and stretched himself, and his out-flung arm fell upon another, who started up with a yell of agony and the cry:

“Mercy on me, O king! Mercy on me!”

"Peace, bread-kneader!" answered the first trooper, with an assumption of kingly dignity; "and tell me why I should have mercy on you."

"I but dreamed," said the other, not noticing his humor; "and I would some one might discover the meaning of the dream for me."

"That might I do," retorted the other teasingly. "But this much only will I tell you, the vision was a bad one."

"How know you that?" he cried admiringly. "In truth I think that you might tell it all. I vow to you it troubles me."

The dreamer, a fat and flabby-faced man, had no look of a soldier. In fact he was chief baker to the king; but according to the law of Pharaoh, every man of his household must at some time serve in the army; and it had been his fate to meet with capture on his first campaign. He sat quite still where he had risen, after the trooper had gone laughingly away, with a look of much anxiety on his features, which was only dispelled when a dwarf, who had wriggled himself in and out

among the sleepers wakening them with tweaks and ticklings, suddenly came behind him with a loud "Boo!"

He started again with a nervous cry, and then seeing who was beside him, asked eagerly:

"Neco, can you tell dreams?"

The dwarf wagged his head.

"Yes, and riddles too," he said. "Why is a——"

"Wait, Neco," cried a number of the soldiers. "Speak so we can all hear. Now go on."

"Why," said the jester, "is a babbling tongue like a knife?"

"Because it pricks," said one. "No, no," scoffed another. "Because it is a woman's weapon."

"Not so, my wise friends," replied the dwarf. "It is because—ha! ha! that you should be so dull in guessing. A babbling tongue is like a knife because it can cut off its owner's head."

A roar of easy laughter followed this riddle;

but the baker-soldier groaned. "I like not your jokes. But is there any one among you who can read dreams?"

"Have done with your babble, O Thah of the ovens," interrupted one of the company roughly. "Let us hear more of Neco's sayings."

But another member of the king's household spoke for the dejected baker: "Who are you that scoff at dreams?" he said. "And what man here can say they portend naught of evil? I, too, have had some sleep thoughts which I would like clear written for me."

Thah moved over to stand beside the speaker, and the jester, at the urgings of the soldiers, continued:

"Why is a wazir who rules over a king like a man riding on a lion?"

No one made an attempt to answer, and after a brief wait he gained their applause by saying:

"Because the people fear him, and he is afraid of what he rides."

But now the guards of Edom came in with great trays of metal heaped with fruit and bread and jars of water ; and the soldiers found better uses for their mouths than story-telling. When they had eaten, Potiphar, who was quartered in a small chamber adjoining the main hall, entered and went among them inquiring after their welfare. Thah, only, presented a miserable countenance, and the captain listened patiently to his dream, promising him to ask for a soothsayer, if one was to be found in Edom, to set his mind at rest concerning it.

Potiphar had been allowed the freedom of the garrison, and on the day of his capture had been granted an audience with his young prince. He had gone in anger to the boy, determined to use a general's privilege of stern speech to him for causing the loss of the battle. But he found the son of his king a weeping, humbled captive, and so instead of reproaches he gave him a soldier's tears as he knelt to kiss his powerless young hand.

So far a meeting with Esau had been post-

poned. But now, as he stood among his troopers, a messenger came to tell him to prepare Mentu for a visit from the old prince. He started to ascend the spiral stairs, when the soldier who had defended Thah against the ridicule of the others caught him by the garment.

"If you find a soothsayer, O captain," he whispered, "let him come first to me. I had a strange and troubling vision in the night concerning Pharaoh."

"I shall have little strength for battle if my camp is given up to dreams," said the officer, with a tinge of sadness. "But be it even as you wish," and he continued his way to the upper chamber.

It was early morning, and the great sea, which was plainly visible from their tower, was softly violet now that the sun was behind them.

The young prisoners had watched it at dawn, when the waters were like wine and the mountains of the north cloaked in mists; and at noon, when sky and sea and plain were

brazen, and the forest of Gilead seemed to beckon all Palestine to its cool green shade. They could see the black and tan goats scamper up the heights, nearer at hand, and cover in the shelter of a single tree, where a herdsman drowsed beside a cistern. And they had gazed out over the land when it slumbered under the moonlight and the night-shrouded, sentinel hills wore opal crowns.

Potiphar struck the door with the hilt of his blade, and at the call of the prince entered. He was pale and depressed, for the defeat was a sad blow to his soldierly pride; and he leaned on his sword heavily as he faced his master. But the boy had recovered his spirits somewhat, and now called:

“What of the day, my captain? Shall we have speech with the white-bearded ruler of these hills? In truth I hope so, for I warrant there has been some talk in our favor between him and the maid; and I confess that I am weary of this prison.”

“Esau has charged me to advise you of his

coming, O Egypt," replied Potiphar. "Even now he is on his way hither."

"It is well," said Mentu, now every inch a prince. "Son of Aman, stand at my right hand; and do you, my captain, conduct him to my presence with all honor."

He took the low chair under the purple canopy and Joseph stood silently beside him. There was a marked difference between the looks of the two lads, although they were of nearly the same age. The king's son was small in stature and of dark coloring. His nose was narrow and fine and his upper lip short and haughty; but the brow slanted back under the serpent diadem, and his chin was querulous and irresolute. The Hebrew was tall and strong, with a mighty chest and uplifted countenance. His eyes were blue and his hair abundant and golden. And it was on his face that the eyes of the old prince lingered as he entered the chamber.

"Hail to you, son of Egypt's lord!" he said, spreading his hands toward them. "And to you, son of the morning. Peace be unto you."

He smiled a little at the fanciful title he bestowed on the shepherd; and the boy met his glance with a quiver at his young heart. Here was his uncle—the generous, passionate, all-forgiving Esau, who had been tricked and defrauded by his brother even as the lad had been by his. He felt a sudden youthful impulse to throw himself upon his breast and pour out his sympathy; but then a new thought came to him as he looked. For he who had gone forth with a belated blessing from the tents of Isaac was now ruler of a mighty nation. His cheek flushed at a further thought, and he smiled.

But Esau had sat down beside the prince and was talking to him kindly. The old man was of majestic figure, and his flowing garments of snowy linen were not whiter than his beard and hair. The last was bound by a silver fillet around his brow and hung below his shoulders.

“In truth it seemed a poor return for so much kindness,” he was saying to Mentu tolerantly; “but if I mistake not the great king,

when he meets his broken phalanxes, will be glad to learn you watched in safety while the battle waged. Take comfort to your heart, because of this; and I will grant you make complaint with reason. Be sure this will not be your last quick capture by a maid."

He laughed in his beard, nodding merrily, and then continued: "But lest I meet disfavor in her eyes and have to buy my peace with foolish promises, I must say the Princess Rhoda sends her greeting to the prince, and bids him take, with them, her promised freedom for himself and company."

The Egyptian sprang up joyfully.

"My thanks are yours, O prince of Edom," he exclaimed; "and I shall have such words to seek my father's ears as may for ever make a peace between you. But I would see the maiden ere we leave."

"It is her whim," replied Esau, "to ride with you and this young archer here as far as the ravine through which your army passed. By this the plain of Sela hides the dead and all the sand is yellow in the light." His brow

darkened and he spoke with sadness, but quickly rallying he turned to Joseph and said:

“Your cradle, lad, swung not in Egypt. What is your name?”

“I am called Dath, son of Aman the Arabian,” replied the Hebrew in a low tone. But the keen old eyes were upon him, and again he felt the desire to throw himself upon his breast. Esau answered:

“I asked not what you are called; but who you are.” Then, half to himself, continued: “Has Canaan raised her whip above another son?”

He went to the farther window and, as though he had expressed his wish, the boy followed him. Once there, their eyes met steadily.

“I knew,” said the old man, “one other face like yours; somewhat less strong, because it was a woman’s; but not less comely. Her name was——”

The boy’s eyes swam in tears, and his lips formed involuntarily one whispered word:

“Rachel!”

Then, with no other sign, the old hand caught the young one in its grasp.

"They know not," said Joseph hurriedly, with a glance at the prince and his officer, now busy with the plans of departure. "Betray me not to them. My brothers sold me to our kinsman Ishmael's sons, and they had pity on me, and made me free to win revenge. But Jacob weeps at Hebron."

His voice quivered; but the eyes under the snowy brows glowed like coals.

"'Tis Jacob's time for tears," said Esau. "Are you the youngest of his sons?"

"No. Benjamin is scarcely three years old. I am Joseph. Give me your blessing."

He fell upon his knees, and Esau's hand trembled on his head; then he sprang to his feet and stood before his kinsman proudly.

The latter's eyes grew suddenly dim, and he put out his hand to detain him.

"There is a son's place at my side for Rachel's firstborn," he said with emotion. "Your father knew it not; nor did she see that she was dearer to me than the light of

morning. Stay with me now, and let my fading eyes dwell on your face and dream that it is hers."

Joseph bent and pressed his fresh lips to his uncle's hand.

"My heart answers you, O Esau," he replied, "but something within me urges me to Egypt. I—" He stopped, for a sudden clamor of voices came to them from the stairway.

"He promised, I swear to you, he promised to send a soothsayer, and it is now beyond the hour," rose an hysterical complaint; and a dozen other voices calling "peace" added to the uproar. Esau stepped forward.

"What is it, good captain?" he asked of Potiphar. And the officer answered:

"Heed it not, O prince. The king's baker has had a vision which disturbs him. He prays for an interpreter of dreams, and I was pledged to ask your highness for the services of a soothsayer. Another also of my men has had some troubled night thoughts."

Esau looked perplexed, and combed his beard with his fingers thoughtfully.

"The wisest seer in Edom perished in the battle," he said at last, "and his one son, who learned his art from him, lies in grief's cureless fever."

Then Joseph, with a courteous gesture toward the old prince, and another toward the son of Pharaoh, advanced a few steps and spoke to Potiphar.

"We of the tents of Kedar know the stars," he said, quietly going to the door; "and I have won some praise by making visions plain. Where are the men? I go to read their dreams."

CHAPTER XVI

The Wife of Potiphar

POTIPHAR came slowly down the flight of steps which led from the king's audience room to the garden and walked toward his own dwelling which, with the houses of other important officers, was within the half-square of the palace and fronting on the royal court.

The captain was deep in thought, and he gave little heed to the people who hurried by him intent on their various duties connected with the household; and when a group of lawyers in their scarlet cloaks stopped to tell him the latest jest which they had seen lampooned upon the wall, he smiled absently, giving little heed to what was said. But as they left him, and a slender boy, who sought to hide a twisted back beneath a gay coat, approached, he paused and held out a friendly hand.

“Hail, singer of Mizraim!” he called.
“Have you a new song to please the ears of Taia’s ladies that you are hurrying so fast?”

The lad flushed at the title bestowed half playfully by the soldier; but he answered seriously:

“I have no heart for framing songs of mirth or love, my captain. My thoughts are with our legions. Are men such poor and miserable things that thrice a thousand lives go out like candles in a draught and leave no records after them?”

“’Tis theirs to do, and yours to sing their deeds,” answered the soldier shortly. Then, in a lower tone, he continued:

“They were brave men who met defeat at Sela. But a battle is one’s own when he has lost it. A victory belongs to some one else. The hearts that dare, the arms that strike, have but one name, and that is Pharaoh. But come, what brings you to the palace?”

“The summons of the king. I thought mayhap he wished a funeral hymn for those who lost their lives in the last battle.”

“I think not so,” responded Potiphar. “More likely he will bid you weave a cunning strain to nerve his oarsmen on an expedition. I have but left him filled with plans for sending ships to Punt. Indeed, so pleased is he with the new venture he scarcely gives a thought to our bereavements. Take my advice, and say nothing of past sorrows while your king is planning new ones. Fit your song to the beat of oars and the swirl of waters and the thrill of conquests. Say no word of storms or shoals or swallowing seas.”

He smiled on the poet kindly, and said as he turned away:

“To the palace with your songs. I have sterner things to occupy me.”

The captain of the king's troops had gone to Pharaoh dreading the effect of the evil news he carried. But so absorbed was the ruler with the maps and charts on the great table before him that he gave slight heed to the report, and the soldier finished it without interruption. Then the head in its wig of gold lifted.

“Said you not my son rode back in safety?” questioned Pharaoh.

“It is well with him, O king. But now I saw him in the garden with his mother.”

“Then make an end of this long story of disaster and give me of your counsel. Here are the parchments that my seers have drawn to show my kingdom in the arms of seas. South lies the land of Punt, full of its mines and fields of riches that await my hand. See here the course. Shall not an arm as long as Pharaoh’s stretch and make these little islands jewels for his fingers?”

The soldier bent over the charts and followed with attentive eyes the trembling tracery of the stylus in the ruler’s hand. Never before had he seen his king so eager, so sanguine of success, so filled with the enthusiasm of a discoverer.

“The expedition tempts my fancy,” he continued. “I would that I might lead my fleet and have a part in the adventures that the voyage hazards. Here are reports from my shipbuilders. Three of the five new galleys

are complete, each taking thirty oars and winged with ample sails. I need but give them blood and breath. And for that we must find men who know the secrets of the tides and dare to find the path of our Lord Sun beyond the brim of waters. I would, good Potiphar, that I might go."

The king rose and paced the room in excitement, and then, as though fretted by restraints, he unclasped his mantle and stood before his officer in his plain tunic of white silk, beneath which his great chest showed his unused muscles. The soldier glanced at him admiringly.

"The sceptre robs the sword in you, O Egypt!" he exclaimed impetuously, and then checked himself, murmuring excuses. But Pharaoh seemed not ill-pleased as he answered:

"Since you are so good a judge of men of valor, O my captain, do you go forth and engage me sailors for this enterprise."

Potiphar moved toward the door, but stopped between two painted columns and looked back hesitatingly.

“What is it you would say?” asked the king, noticing his manner. “Your right to open speech has been earned and granted.” And the soldier answered:

“What promise, O protector of the innocent, shall I bear forth to stop the fears of those who weep in Egypt?”

Pharaoh turned and smiled gratefully.

“Had I not you beside me, O my captain,” he said, “I might deserve a name less kind among my people. Take to the widows and the fatherless the tears and blessings of their king, and put their names upon a monolith to show that they and theirs shall be my wards while I am Pharaoh.”

The captain went out, his thanks halted by emotion; for notwithstanding the seeming indifference of his king he knew the helpless wives and little ones would not be left to hunger. So it was he had walked to meet the poet hurrying toward the palace.

When Potiphar left the boy he continued his way to his house thoughtfully. He had installed Joseph in his office when the army had

returned from the red hills, and he was assured the young archer would be of assistance to him in the execution of the new and arduous commissions. He ascended the stairs and passed through the deserted corridor, stopping to loose his sword and lay it on a chair before sweeping aside the arras and entering the official chamber. But there, with his hand on the curtain, he stopped at the sound of his own name on the lips of the Hebrew.

"Say not so, O wife of Potiphar," said the lad, evidently in answer to some complaint. "He dreams of you upon the battle eve, and all his victories are for you as well as for Mizraim——"

"He loves me not," interrupted the soldier's wife sullenly. "All day I sit alone while he is off to his wars or planning business with the king. And, like you, I am a stranger——"

Her voice broke in a childish sob, and the hand on the curtain outside clenched in a closer hold. For a moment a vision crossed the mind of the listener. He had gathered

her from a full-blossomed tree in a garden of Tyre—and here she was alone. Then he heard the soft murmur of silken garments crossing the floor.

“Be not so cold,” continued the soft tones. “So faint and weak a thing as this poor hand would cast away its jewels just to wear your kiss. Come, sit beside me. Talk to me of love.”

The soldier outside reached for his sword and drew it from its scabbard silently. Then, as he again caught the arras in his grasp, he heard the Hebrew’s rough protest:

“Take your arm from my neck, wife of my friend. Only before his eyes will I kiss your hand. In the tents we learn not to betray.”

Zerel drew her arm away fiercely, carrying with it the light mantle he had worn across his shoulder. Her black eyes narrowed to lines of flame, but as she was about to speak a slight sound startled her, and she looked up to see Potiphar standing in the door with his unsheathed sword in his hand and his glance upon the mantle still hanging in her fingers.

Her frightened gaze followed his to the Hebrew, who stood looking with direct and steady eyes full in his captain's face. For a moment her heart stopped in terror. Then her wit leaped to her rescue. She lifted her head and walked toward the soldier.

"You timed your coming well, my husband," she said; "but now I seized this garment from this froward shepherd's shoulder that I might show it you when I accused him."

"Of what will you accuse him?"

The Hebrew made a quick gesture of surprise, but seeing the look on Potiphar's face, he stepped back and folded his arms over his breast in silence.

"Of what will you accuse him?" repeated the captain, with his eyes bent on her face. "The fault must be a grave one if your mother-heart makes no excuses for him. But tell it me"—she put her hand to her throat, as if to press back her sobs—"and I will take revenge, and call our son in here to see that I have killed his saviour. Speak!"

Zerel, white with an emotion overwhelm-

ing in intensity, tried to speak. But her breath came in quick gasps, and she cowered under the sad gaze bent upon her. Potiphar stepped forward to support her, but she waved him back. Then with more courage than he had ever known in the wild shock of battle, she controlled her trembling limbs and stood upright, stretching out her hand and pointing toward Joseph:

“I accuse him,” she said, and her voice rang through the room, “of faithfulness to his duty. And commend him, my lord, to your benefits.” She stopped with a sob, and then added: “And now let me go hence. I, a mother who could forget her child!”

She threw out her arms with a gesture of self-reproach and misery, and walked with bowed head toward the door. But the cheeks of the grim soldier were wet with tears as he strode across and took her in his arms. The clang of the sword as it fell to the marble floor made Joseph raise his head. A moment he hesitated; then he walked out of the place silently; and Potiphar held his wife to his breast.

“I, too, am much to blame,” he said, brokenly. “I was without and heard you say I did not love you. O Zerel, lonely little heart, faint with its store of unclaimed love, my sin against you is of deeper dye than your weak, woman wickedness. O homesick little stranger, this breast will be a warmer shelter for you now. I will forgive you for that sudden wrong if you can pardon me for leaving your soft lips for the hoarse call of war-pipes. Come, let us walk. Nay, do not tremble now. I will lay aside this buckler that I may feel you closer at my side.”

He unstrapped the silver-studded shield he wore upon his breast and threw it down beside his sword. Then, with his arm around her and her long garments murmuring and swirling around his mailed sandals, they went through the door.

CHAPTER XVII

In the Shawl Tents

TEN thousand shawl-tents in the shade of the Vale of Gilead looked like a garden of flowers to the young traveller coming out of the forest above, and pausing for a moment to look down on the scene.

Over the hills that kneel to Lebanon ran the new foliaged vines; young wheat rose bravely on the gray, volcanic soil of the plateaus, and between the dwarf oaks, terebinths, and pines the olive orchards and the groves of palms and lemon trees waved ribbons of radiant bloom.

The man gave his horse the urging of his hand. Turning the small, intelligent head gently toward a scarcely perceptible opening in the underbrush through which a path must be picked to the valley, and slowly, but with much delicate lifting and balancing of the fine

feet and graceful manœuvres to avoid the treacherous rocks, the great black steed descended the height and entered the village of Aman.

In the pavilion of the chief, Layah sat with her daughter. The girl was taller than when she had seen the battle-cars of Pharaoh leave Tanis for Edom, and her head was lifted like a lily on a stem.

Layah looked up from stringing the pearls for her embroidery and said:

“Sing, daughter of Aman. Why are you silent when the other birds are merry? You used to weave a song as swiftly as I cross the golden thread along the border of a garment. But now are you strangely still. What grief have you, O little one?”

She leaned, mother-wise, to lay her arm around Louimma's neck. But the maiden looked up brightly.

“Tell me, O little mother,” she said suddenly, “what know you of the Hebrews?”

“The Hebrews? I think your father has some commerce with them. Their black

tents are in Canaan, through which we passed when we went down to Egypt. But of their ways and looks I cannot speak. Stay! Was not the lad who joined our caravan of some such tribe?"

"In truth, yes; and he told me something of their ways that made me wonder. There was among them a man who loved a maid and waited seven and twice seven years before he went to claim her. Among no other people in the land is there such patience. But think you he would be so witless as to wait like that?"

"I know not," answered Layah, unconcerned; "but it is said that sons are often like their mothers. I doubt if women are content to dally so with time. But since you bring the matter of the lad back to my mind, he promised me to meet us here in Gilead."

"And so said he to me," said Louimma; "and I told him that he would not come. But did you think him of so little spirit as to let a girl's weak words come true? What think you of a man who hears a maiden boast

and shows her not that she speaks foolishly? I told him that he would not come, and he has not! Were I a tall young shepherd, and a little maid said that a thing must come to pass, I would not rest until I proved her error."

Layah laughed softly.

"Peace, prattler!" she said. "Men little understand such reasoning. They strive to be proved right, in any case; we, if we love, would rather be proved wrong—if we have chosen to take sides against them in their arguments."

"Of course," answered Louimma. "We like not to be winners in so poor a fight. There is (I have seen it oft in women's eyes) something of pain in victory. But mark. If ever man comes to this tent to woo, and seeks to bend his will to mine, instead of making my half-frighted heart obey him, I will not listen though his promises are music. I care not if I never see the Hebrew youth again——"

She stopped, startled, to see the richly-colored drapery of the door drawn aside with

a hand that showed no sign of patience, and as Joseph—bronzed and dressed as a traveller—entered and stood smiling down at her, she cried joyfully:

“He has come, little mother!” And with a note of triumph added: “Said I not so?”

“You said I would not, if I heard aright,” he laughed, raising her hand to his forehead.

After the greetings had been said and Layah had exclaimed over the growth of the young Hebrew in the years of their separation, she raised a golden trumpet to her lips and sent one musical note piercing the distance. “That will bring Aman homeward as fast as the feet of the steed of the desert may fly,” she said. “His arms have yearned for you as for a son.”

“And mine for his, as son for father, O Layah,” he answered, with emotion. “In all that I have done his name has blessed me. There has not been a day in all this time my heart has not sought shelter in this vale.”

He looked at Louimma as he spoke, and her cheek paled as she went hastily out to prepare refreshment for him.

"I told you that each time the curtains stirred and fell we should look up for you," said Layah. "They have been troubled many times and we were half despairing."

"My time has been the king's," he answered. "A year in Punt, heaping the ships of Pharaoh with strange merchandise and slaves; another year trying to keep what he had won, with every changing fortune. Now peace is in the land, and I made use of my short liberty to come where all my heart has led. Hark, heard you not a horse urged at full speed?"

"Your ears are quick, O archer," she replied. "I hear no sound."

"My pulse is tuned to the trample of steeds," he cried, running outside and scanning the distant plain eagerly. Then he stretched his arms and ran toward the man and horse coming toward him, and in a few moments Aman, with a cry of joy, sprang down, and the two were locked in a warm embrace.

Once and again the chief raised his head and

pushed the young man away to get a good view of him, and as often drew him close to his breast in pride; and then, talking and clasping hands and stopping to gaze again at each other, they finally came up to the tent where the women waited with the viands.

"Egypt has left no blight upon you, son of Jacob," said the chief, regarding him thoughtfully; and the young man answered:

"Call me not that. The name pricks in my heart with its sharp memory. I have one given me in selfless love that I would bear through life. My name, O chief, is Dath, son of Aman of Arabia."

"So let it be," said the Arabian; and leaning forward he solemnly kissed him.

"And now for the adventures," he continued in a lighter tone. "Come in, Louimma, little one; I never knew a gentle dove like you without a taste for battles. Sit by my side."

She nestled down beside him and Layah, still threading the pearls, turned a mild, listening look toward the young man, who finished

his repast and answered by recounting the expedition against Edom and the defeat of the army of Pharaoh—not forgetting the part the red-haired princess had in keeping him with his prince a spectator instead of a combatant on that occasion. Layah and her daughter were greatly interested in this part of the narrative, and frequently interposed sharp exclamations. But when he dwelt upon Rhoda's beauty, the desert maid seemed little pleased. Although Layah shook her pink-tipped finger at him merrily.

“I warrant that you left your heart with your fair kinswoman,” she said. But Joseph answered:

“Not so, O wife of Aman. I took it not to Sela with me. But my prince, much to the joy of Pharaoh, who would make lasting peace with Edom, will shortly take the maid to wife.”

“Some rumors reached us by the caravans that Mentu loved the High Priest's daughter,” said Aman; and Joseph, embarrassed for an answer, at length said blushinglly:

“He does—at least he did. But he no sooner saw the princess than the memory of Asenath faded as the moon at sunrise.”

Aman looked up with an understanding eye. But Louimma pouted:

“I like not your prince,” and went over to lean against her mother.

“The king opposed his marriage to the High Priest’s daughter,” resumed Joseph; “and it is said the lady had no love to give the prince, and only yielded to her father’s great ambition when she gave her promise. But now Pentephres has sworn before the sun that he will not allow the marriage to be made with Fsau’s daughter until Asenath takes a husband of as high a rank as that of the young prince.”

“Then must she go unwedded to the tomb,” sighed Layah. “For who is there in Egypt of such great estate?”

“No other one,” answered the Hebrew. “And the king is sick concerning the whole matter.”

“Is the girl well-favored?” asked the chief. And Joseph said:

“I have not seen her, but her fame has gone through all the land for goodness as for beauty. She does not want the prince, and says so stoutly. But Pharaoh dreads the vengeance of the Priest of On, and so the marriage waits.”

“I doubt not you have seen strange sights in all your travels,” observed Aman, changing the subject. “What new adventure followed on the heels of the defeat at Edom?”

“When we returned to Tanis,” answered the young man, “it seemed Apepi scarcely mourned his legions, so deep was he in plans for kingdom stretching. The ships—long building by the sea—were now complete, and he made haste to test their keels upon the beat of waters. We started with a fleet; each galley taking thirty oars and purple, silken wings for swifter flying when the gales favored. And with the prince to lead and a strong company of soldiers to attend, we sailed by the Red Sea southward to Punt, where we bought ivory from the little people who seem to have much skill in trapping ele-

phants. We made our mission peaceful with gifts; established trade in spices, ebony, gold, and precious stones, and brought whole trees from out their incense forests to bloom in the gardens of the Nile."

"A task of difficulty, I doubt not, O my son," said Aman. "How were the branches kept alive to grow again throughout the voyaging?"

"We raised them with their earth about their roots and carried them as monarchs should be borne—on litters to the galleys. There, standing upright in a sheltered place, well screened by awnings, they bore the rocking of the waves with no complaint, and lived to gladden Pharaoh."

The day had now advanced toward evening and as slaves entered the pavilion with lamps, Layah and Louimma went into the adjoining room to lay fresh flowers on the table before the chief and their guest should join them at supper. And when the garlands were all laid in place, the little mother, with a smile of tenderness, reached and put a rose in her tall daughter's hair.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Garden of Love

“WELL?” asked Louimma, and Joseph laughed.

“So said you when I told a tale that night I first saw Egypt. Do you remember? It was about a lamb. And when my tongue had used all its poor words and had no more to say you fell to beating me.”

The girl answered his smile and said:

“And now, when you no longer measure with your shepherd staff, and seem to have as full a quiver of good words as then you had of arrows, you cannot speak to me.”

Joseph looked down on her silently as they walked between the hedges of pink oleanders in the path by the lake. For a moment he could not control his voice, and then he said softly:

“I know not why it is, O little one, but all my speech melts into silence when I look at

you. There is so much my heart leaps up to say, and yet it waits as though no words were fashioned for its meaning."

They stood now in the soft and fragrant shadows of the trees; her eyes were hidden from his gaze and her scarf trembled on her bosom.

"Last night," he said, "I slept this side the river Jordan upon a stone the gentle earth had veiled with mosses, and thrice I wakened at the sound of music within the rock beneath me. I asked a shepherd for the secret of the vocal stone, but he could not tell me; and so I made a reason. Once the sad hollow in its breast was filled by some sweet song poured by a bulbul for the ear of spring, and since the pretty sound has been a prisoner. 'Tis so with your soft name, O daughter of my friend; and who would lay a head upon my breast would hear my heart for ever saying it."

He reached out his arms and drew her close that she might listen. And she made no complaint at the strong surging of the heart be-

neath her ear, and his lips fell on the rose in her shining hair, and then on the cheek that rivalled it.

“You knew that I would come?” he asked tenderly. And she answered, with a touch of her old sauciness:

“I feared you might have such sad patience as your father’s. And so in truth it seemed, you stayed so long away. But tell me now, and thrice a day for every day I live, how do you love me?”

“As Jacob loved his Rachel,” he answered reverently. “And now must I ask of the friend, who has given me so much, his greatest treasure. I will take you to your mother. It is her right to hear the story first.”

They walked with their young arms entwined to the entrance to Layah’s pavilion, and then, taking the rose from her hair and placing it in his bosom, he left her to go with his hope to Aman.

The chief rose from his cushions as Joseph entered.

“Come here, my son, and sit at my right

hand," he said; "for there do I desire to keep you. Hark, we can hear the sistrums from the women's tent. It seems to-night Louimma's heart has some new melody."

He glanced at Joseph with a smile inviting confidence; but the Hebrew answered:

"Some little business have I with you, O my friend, before I speak of all I wish to tell you. And that concerns the purse you put in Levi's hand that day at Dothan."

The Arab made a gesture of aversion, but the young man urged gently:

"Humor my wish, O chief. I cannot come to you a slave upon this other matter; and such the law must hold me despite your generosity."

Aman laid his arm around the speaker's shoulders.

"I paid the wolfish shepherd twenty pieces of silver," he said, "and gained from him a son to carry my name with honor into battle. Let there be no talk of that transaction between you and me. See——"

He drew Joseph to the opening of the tent

and swept his hand over the valley now murmuring with the sound of voices and instruments which arose from the tents.

“All this is mine, and thrice ten thousand spears would catch the moonlight on their burnished points at the first call of yonder trumpet. My cattle roam upon the farthest hills; my caravans are ever on the way between Damascus and the land of Egypt. All this is mine, and yours——”

He stopped abruptly, and Joseph laid his face down on his shoulder. When he raised it tears shone in the soft golden beard upon his cheeks; but he shook his head, answering, as he pressed the money-bag in Aman's hand:

“Receive the price, O chief, that I may give myself to you. This is my purchase money, won in fair services to Pharaoh; and now, a free man, I ask your light of life—the little maiden singing in her mother's tent—to be my own.”

The Arab took him in his strong embrace and blessed him.

“Be it even as you wish, O beloved,” he

said with emotion. Then, while music sounded through the camp and snatches of happy laughter and bits of song came to them from the distance, the two men talked together in the unlighted tent of all that had occurred of moment during the time of their separation. Aman listened to the young man's description of his meeting with Esau with marked interest.

"And so it was a woman's eyes which turned his wrath to pity that day beyond Jordan," he said musingly. And then, as he caught Joseph's inquiring look, continued:

"You know, O son, there was no love between the heirs of Isaac—your father and your uncle. Their glances struck a flame when they were face to face; and from the time the two had parted in their father's tent they had not met until the day I mentioned. I chanced to be with a laden caravan bound westward, when Jacob, with his household and flocks and herds, was going back to Canaan. The slaves crossed first, and when the sandals of the litter bearers had left the Jordan, those who had

gone ahead came riding back in haste, calling to Jacob:

“ ‘Your brother comes with thrice a hundred men with spears and arrows.’ And even as they spoke Esau and his horsemen came into sight, and the light glistened upon their lances. Never had I seen your father fear till then. Hastily he gathered his company, and sent truce-bearers ahead with gifts and offers of friendship. But if ever anger burned beneath a shield it was in Esau’s breast. Unheeding Jacob’s embassy of peace, he swept on to his late vengeance. And such was his mad haste, lashed by the sudden memory of his wrongs, I doubt not that his sword would have found sheath within the heart of Jacob had not Rachel, with a child upon her breast, rushed in between them. I saw her for a moment while the sword trembled above her, and she was fairer than the dawn; and then I heard a clang as the blade fell harmless on the highway. He turned and made a gesture to his host, and all along his lines spears kissed the sands, while the horses reared back under

the sudden tightening of their bridles. Then the red prince leaped to earth, and Jacob, unresisted, fell upon his bosom. But I saw Esau's gaze as it lifted above his brother's shoulder and rested on the woman."

"Then I have twice been kept unharmed beneath my uncle's sword," said Joseph; "for I am he who rested on that mother-breast throughout that journey from the tents of Laban. But tell me, O my friend, have you heard aught by caravan or courier of those who dwell at Hebron? My heart would drink of news as desert travellers lap water, in whatever pool I find it."

"A merchant buying lentisk gum and spices brought me trifling rumors from the place a year ago," answered the Arab. "Jacob lives, but as one who walks with sorrow. The youngest boy—your brother Benjamin—leaves not his side for fear some harm may come to him; and it is said each season when the harvesters go to the threshing floors the sons of Jacob blight the merry-making with sad looks. Now and again I hear that

they are seeking me—perchance to learn some news of you. But I have little wish to see or pity them.”

Joseph looked up with emotion.

“Let me go hence, O friend,” he cried, “to comfort him who loved me, and pour the balm of my forgiveness in my brothers’ breasts. I will not stay. My staff has blossomed into a sword. But let me go and dry that old man’s tears, and then I will return to you.”

“Take back your love, O son of Israel,” Aman cried bitterly. “I share not with the Hebron shepherds. Between the sons of Isaac and the sons of Ishmael there is a stream of hate. It is for you to choose between us now, and by that choice abide. Speak!”

Joseph had sprung to his feet at the first sign of anger in the chief’s voice, and now opened his arms and ran to embrace him. But before he had reached his breast a cry came to them, full of terror and agony, and Louimma, white as the lilies she had gathered and still held in her hands, rushed into the tent and fell in the arms outstretched toward the Hebrew.

Layah followed, running, and calling shrilly:

“A serpent has stung her, O husband—a serpent in the garden of lilies!” And women slaves crowded in, wailing and crying in wildest confusion and alarm. But Aman, with stricken looks, swept his arm outward, and as they left he laid the girl on a couch and bent over her to find the wound, which was above the string of jingling bells around her slender ankle.

Two faint purple marks showed where the fangs had pierced the tender flesh, and as Layah, weeping, hurriedly loosed the anklet, Joseph sank to his knees and put his lips to the place, drawing the poison out with suction, while Aman sank beside him, pale and speechless, and stroked with his strong, brown fingers the little sun-stained hand. And for a moment there was no sound to break the sudden overwhelming silence as the three who loved her best bent over the girl.

But now the tent-folds opened quickly and a slave woman came in with a bowl full of

violets. Turning these upon a tray, she cut and kneaded them into a fragrant pulp with their green leaves, and spread them on a strip of linen. This done, she touched Joseph on the shoulder, and when he lifted his head she examined the wound and laid the cool poultices upon it. Then, nodding hopefully toward the anxious watchers, she went out as quietly as she had come. Layah looked up a little later and smiled through her tears at Joseph, for the girl had opened her eyes. But Aman, after a swift glance at the orbs that had been like the stars of heaven to him, rose and went outside of the tent and paced the sands. Inside he heard Layah's cooing love tones as she brooded over her child, and now and then the deeper tones of the young lover.

"Where are you, father of the desert star?" called the little mother. "Come and see what magic lurked in Habba's poultices. Louimma is awake. And yet I think she walks with dreams, for her eyes are strangers to me. Speak, little one! See here our lion slayer!"

She shook her gently by the shoulder, but the girl lay with a strange smile on her face and did not seem to see her.

“Look, daughter of Aman,” persisted Layah, a note of wonder chilling the confidence of her tones. “Here is your archer, come to you from his battles. Give him a wife’s smile, O beloved!”

She smiled and patted her encouragingly. But still there was no response, and the mother looked her sudden fear as she said:

“Call her, son of our hearts; her sweet spirit is wandering away from us. Call her!”

Joseph took the slender figure in his arms and her head rested on his bosom.

“Hear me, O my love,” he whispered. “You are sweeter to me than the kiss of spring. Answer me, Louimma; answer me.”

She stirred faintly in his embrace, but did not respond to it, and he kissed her eyelids down over her passionless eyes with a fierce pain at his heart. But as his lips fell on her mouth it moved under them.

“Twelve stars with faces such as men wear

are in the sky," she said in the low, emotionless tone of one who dreams, "and one is he who tamed the desert steed, and all the others bear strange looks and bow before him." She fell into silence for a brief period, and then continued: "I see a golden harvest field, and one tall sheaf has royal robes and stands to take the homage of the lesser ones——"

Her voice failed; the last words slipping slowly through the sweet portal of her speech. But Joseph cried:

"These are my dreams, Louimma! My half-forgotten visions of the field. Wake, O my sister soul, and tell me more." But he stopped and laid her back in her place, for a sudden beat of hoofs sounded, and then halted at the tent door; and after a moment Aman, pale and grave, entered with an Egyptian soldier.

"I bring you a command from Pharaoh, O archer of Arabia," said the officer advancing. "The son of the Sun has had strange visions, and has searched the double kingdoms for a reader of his dreams. But late his butler,

who saw service with you before the walls of Edom, has remembered that you told him truly all the meaning of his night thoughts, and the king has sent me with his fleetest steed to bring you to his presence. Make haste and mount. There must be no delay."

He saluted and withdrew from the tent, and Joseph heard Aman give commands for his refreshment and another horse. Then the Arab came back, and the two looked at each other steadily as they heard Louimma smile and whisper to herself among her pillows. Her mother's bewildered eyes went from one to the other pitifully. But Aman's brow was white and drawn with pain as he put his arm gently around her and said, looking at Joseph:

"It is ever thus the serpent's work is done. By means of your brave lips, and, may be, too, the balm of violets, her life is spared. But that strange spirit thing we cannot clasp or see has now a wider field, and comes and goes at will, between the worlds. Give up your hope to take her for your wife. For her there is no further thought of love."

He stopped and bowed his head on Joseph, and the two men wept. Then he raised his eyes and looked upon the Hebrew solemnly.

“We bruise our hands when we strike back at fate,” he said. “But come, before the door is now the mohar of the king. Receive my blessing and farewell.”

Joseph knelt, and the hands of the Arab rested on his head. Then the father turned and bent above the smiling dreamer on the couch, and his tears glistened on her hair. For a moment Joseph wavered; then he sprang to her side and kissed her little palms and crushed them to his breast. But they lay cool and still within his clasp, and so he laid them gently in her mother’s waiting hands and, blinded by his tears, rushed from the door.

CHAPTER XIX

Schemes of Kings—and Mothers

“**A**DAPHA broke the wings of the south wind,” said Taia, the queen, to her little son, who was nestled on a heap of cushions beside her, eager for a story.

“How did he break them?” questioned the small Egyptian.

“I know not,” replied the mother.

“Was it with a battle-ax?”

“Oh, no.”

“Mayhap it was a spear? Jovo, the guard, has strength to take a mighty lance and whirl it above his head. I saw him but this morning from my window. Think you Adapha broke the wind’s wings with a spear?”

“I know not, prattler. But will you hear the story?”

“Yes; and tell me how looked the wings. Were they like the eagle’s, strong and feather-

tipped? Or were they like the gauzy sails that bear aloft the dragon-fly? Those could I crush within my hollow hand. But tell me more."

"When he had broken the shining pinions he was summoned to appear before Anu."

"Who is Anu, mother?"

"The lord of the sky."

"Is not my father, Pharaoh, lord of heaven?"

"No. Of the earth alone," answered the king's wife. "But when Adapha had made his journey through the stars, and stood weary and faint before the prince of heaven, he refused to eat the water and the bread of death."

"So would I do," cried the child. "Go on."

"And when Anu saw his sorrow he felt great pity for him and brought him other food—water, in glasses of crystal, and wonderful clusters of purple fruit."

"Better than we have in our house of grapes?" asked the boy.

"Yes; better than we have ever seen. But

Adapha turned away and would not touch his offering. Then Anu sadly said: 'Why will you eat not, O foolish man? This which I would have given you is the gift of life, and now it cannot be yours.'"

"Why could it not? Had I been Anu I would have healed the south wind's wings and troubled not Adapha. Come, mother, tell another tale."

"Peace, little one. Not now," answered the queen, turning an expectant look toward the door. "Your father comes. Run to your play."

Apepi drew aside the silken arras and stepped within, and as the little prince ran toward him with a shout of joy, he stooped and lifted him, holding him at arm's length, and laughing to see him strive and struggle to be free.

"Hear now, O rosy one," he said. "As I came through the court I saw a little golden boat drawn by two snow-white swans upon the lotus lake. I wonder in whose hands those reins will fall?"

"In mine, in mine!" cried the boy, in great delight, kicking and twisting to get away. "Let me go, let me go!"

The king set him on his feet and he started toward the door, saying, as he shrugged his little shoulders where the firm grasp had been:

"I doubt not my father could break the wings of the south wind with his hands."

"What means the boy?" asked Pharaoh. And the queen answered laughingly:

"He felt your strength but now. I have been telling him the story of Adapha, the first man. But what new light has come into your eyes, O husband of my soul? Your look has lost its sorrow."

"I came to tell you a strange thing, my queen," he answered, crossing between the porphyry columns of the great chamber and sitting on the cushions where the child had been. "You know I have been troubled by my dreams, and all the readers of the stars and tellers of the secret things of life have been as dumb as stones concerning them. they seemed to me to hold a meaning of im-

portance to our land, for in them I was standing by the Nile watching the cattle grazing in the meadow. They were seven, and as I beheld the gentle creatures, and noted how plump they were within their glossy coats, seven lean and ill-favored ones came up and devoured them. I saw it all, but could not lift a hand in their defence, and awoke sorrowful. But scarcely had I gone to sleep again when I dreamed of standing in a harvest field and seeing seven full and perfect ears upon one stalk; but while I looked, well pleased at such a yield, lo, seven thin and blasted ears sprang in their place and vanquished them."

"Strange visions, in good truth," said the queen thoughtfully. "I wonder not you felt forebodings. But your look tells me all have been made plain."

"Your eyes are keen with love, O heart's delight," he said, taking her hand in his and holding it; "and I doubt not the tale will have great interest for you; for that same lad whose arrow found the lion's eye the day we reared the seventh obelisk, and who companioned

Mentu in his battle-car, and later served us to good purpose in the expeditions to the land of Punt, stood but an hour since before my throne and made the meaning of my dreams as clear as your soft speech."

"That boy?" the queen exclaimed in great surprise. "He seemed like some young flower of the sun standing beside Mentu in his chariot. I well remember that he proved himself a bowman; but seers, I think, should be more venerable. I should but laugh to see a prophecy on such a mouth as his."

"The matter came about like this," replied the king. "Some servants of our house went with the troops to Seir, and while they were in prison there dreamed vexing dreams, which were by him interpreted. His powers reached my ears, and I dispatched a mohar to his father's camp Beyond the Jordan. Could you have seen him stand before me in his youth, with honor on his brow, and in his eyes the light from heaven!"

"What said he of the dreams?" questioned Taia. And Pharaoh answered:

“The seven fat cattle and the seven fair ears were seven bountiful harvests; and the seven lean kine and starving ears were seven years of famine. More than that. The one who gave the warning had a plan to turn it to account. In all respect, he urged me to prepare throughout this time of plenty and gather up the grain from far and near, so when the evil days are come there will be no hunger in the land, and the granaries of Egypt may feed the world.”

Taia sprang to her feet, exclaiming:

“Wise is your counsellor, O king. But what great minister have you to execute his wisdom?”

“Who but himself, O mother of princes,” answered Pharaoh with enthusiasm. “When I had heard his words and reasoned well concerning them, I threw my chain around his neck and put my ring upon his finger and called to those who waited:

“‘Princes and lords of Egypt, behold my prime minister!’”

The queen clapped her hands. “And will

he have authority?" she asked. And he replied with earnestness:

"Second only to my own. I would that you had seen the manner of the youth when on him, like a thunderbolt, fell greatness. His eyes looked level-lidded into mine, and he seemed more intent on what his hand must do than on the sceptre I had placed within it."

"He has a noble look," said Taia, half to herself; "but if I mistake not, it is the product of a noble heart and not of heritage."

"He is the son of Aman, the Arabian," responded Pharaoh, "the owner of the caravan trade between us and Damascus, and a chief of countless spears. He is a man of might and honor; but this young man has not the desert look. I grant his fair face puzzled me but now. I must ask Mentu something of the fibre of his thought when he returns from singing beneath the moon flowers on the rocks of Sela."

At mention of the crown prince the mother's brow became shadowed with anxiety.

“Poor lad!” she sighed. “I would he might bring home the lady of his love. His heart weeps for her. And yet I fear they must remain apart, for what young noble have we in our court to rank beside our son?”

Apepi had been engrossed with the thoughts of the new duties forced upon him, but the last words caught his ears.

“Said I not,” he asked, “that this new lord is second but to me?”

“The Arabian?” Taia said the words in a singing whisper, and then began laughing softly to herself as one who has solved a quandary.

The king arose and went to the window, staring thoughtfully over the vast expanse of flowering land within his view.

“We must build granaries,” he mused. “Towers as strong as treasure-houses to hold the wheat; and this very deed shall sing my name louder than the tongues of obelisks and of temples praise it.”

He smiled as he thought, but his wife was

standing at his shoulder, and her mind was not on the harvest of fields, but of hearts.

“Listen, O love, and answer me,” she said. “Your minister is young, and the sun is not more beautiful when he smiles down on the altars you have raised to glorify him. But somewhere in his heart a man’s love slumbers—” She smiled, hesitated, and then grasped his arm in her tense fingers. “Recall the Priest of On from banishment, O Pharaoh, “and bid him bring his daughter to the palace. He will believe that you have yielded to his will; but let your favorite’s eyes meet Asenath’s, and then a woman’s wit will speed the matter as we wish it. Mentu will take the lady Rhoda for his wife and seal the peace with Edom; and this fair saviour of the land will conquer the proud spirit of the High Priest’s daughter.”

She spoke eagerly, but Pharaoh said:

“Peace, little marriage-maker. The dream-reader already wears some sorrow on his brow of woman’s causing. But still there may be magic in a glance, and I will see what comes

of all your planning. Three days from now we will appoint a feast and gather all the people to welcome their new governor. Let him be told no word of all this matter. Should it come to pass even as your little head has plotted, I shall be content. But now to see my carpenters and artisans. The builders of the pyramids had not so great a task as mine."

He kissed her, bending from his tall height and holding her a tender moment; but when he made haste to go he found himself bound fast by the long braids of her black hair, which she had tied around his neck. And then, after some delay and much laughter, he went away, while Taia, still smiling over her scheme for the happiness of her son, fell into soft singing.

CHAPTER XX

The Heart of a Woman

FROM an upper chamber in her father's house, at Heliopolis, Asenath and her seven maidens watched the preparations going on in the street below.

"I see no cause for all this garland stringing," she said, with the manner of one who hoped for contradiction, as the workmen wreathed the arches with grapes and clustering vines and heaped pyramids of the golden yield of the full harvest along the way on either side. "What is this stranger to us that we must needs pave our streets with flowers for his chariot to crush?"

"He is the favorite of the king, O lady of the sun," replied Orpah, in some surprise that her mistress had remained ignorant of the identity of the expected visitor—a man who had roused all Egypt to enthusiasm. "And it is said that Pharaoh, not content with giving

him authority, seeks daily for some new and crowning honor to put upon him. He is a comely man; but I knew not that kings were moved by comeliness, except in women."

She sighed and shook her head, as women will when motives are beyond their reading. But Asenath laughed.

"Fret not your dear, gray head in finding reasons, Orpah. This man has a way of speaking by his deeds, and they are great enough to merit Pharaoh's favor. Each one of all the twice a thousand cities in the land has sprouted storehouses, and all the grain the seasons lay upon the fields is taken in fine bags—as though each kernel were a treasure—and locked within the granaries."

"Meanwhile the tax is hard, and people make complaint," observed Orpah, in whose old ears that young voice had a new and vibrant sound. "But so do locusts murmur. Neither can cry as far as Pharaoh's ears; but surely this young man might have more pity."

She glanced keenly at the girl as she made her faint complaining; but the sea-green eyes

were hidden by the black lashes which swept the softly-tinted cheek. It was a moment before the daughter of the High Priest answered, and then it was but to say coldly:

“If famine prowls upon the heels of these full harvests, I doubt not we shall all have praises for the man who holds within his hand the life of Egypt.

“But come, I grant I feel from your reports some little interest in him. What know you of his ways, his looks, his speech? There must be something mighty in a soul that sways a king at pleasure.”

“They say he was a comrade of the prince,” said Tasu, the youngest of the attendants, not observing the warning glances of the others; “and it was he who saved the child of Captain Potiphar and won the admiration of his highness for his deeds. Saw you not? ’Twas he who rode behind him in his chariot that day the army marched toward Sela.”

“I saw him not,” replied the maiden shortly. “In truth I did not see the king’s son on that day.”

“Oh!” protested the girl. “Know you not how far we leaned above the casement when you flung the rose?”

“I—I flung no rose.” A wave of crimson swept over the fairest face in Egypt and the proud lip curled haughtily. “Perchance one fell by mishap from my shoulder-wreath and struck a passing chariot.” She turned away, and then resumed smiling. “But the governor is comely. A lord of light with eyes like the great sea at morning.”

She lifted her guitar from the pillows in the window seat and plucked the seven strings, one by one lingeringly, and the other girls went about their tasks—some to their weaving and embroidery, some to the temple with fresh flowers for the altars. But Orpah and the little Tasu stayed, and the younger questioned with girlish curiosity:

“Then you have seen the handsome stranger, O Asenath?”

“Twice,” answered the Egyptian, disposed to be more frank in the absence of her other

women. "On the day he went forth in the prince's battle-car——"

"But now you said you saw him not," interrupted the child, bewildered.

"I saw not the son of Pharaoh," she said, blushing under the look in her questioner's eyes; "for who may see a star that burns within the glory of the sun?" She stopped abruptly, and turned again to her music; but Orpah, although known as "the wise," could not let the matter rest.

"When saw you the young adon after that?" she asked. And the maiden answered, with the far treble of pipes coming in from the street to accompany her:

"A year ago, when Pharaoh made the feast of welcome for him and I was robed for the first time in that soft dress that your swift hands had made so radiant with lotus buds of pearls in vines of gold. The garment, being silver-gauze, well pleased the queen, and never had she been so kind before. She took a jewel from her hair to put in mine, but plucked it out again, saying I needed naught

that she could add to make me beautiful. She placed me on the cushions by her side, and now and then turned smiling glances on me. When we and all the guests were seated at the board the king came in with this strong-shouldered stranger, and his face was as a lily beside the darker countenances of Mizraim. No other man has such a glance as his; and yet when the queen beckoned, and he came and bowed to her and me, he took no more account of me than I had been a rose and not a woman. Scarce had he bent his head—that had a look more royal than the king’s—than he had gone back to his chair, close drawn by that of Pharaoh, and the queen grew cold toward me.”

“I heard a rumor brought from the far east that one he loved had died. But I know not if she were wife or sister,” said Orpah. But little Tasu, proud of her bit of news, made haste to speak it:

“She was his sister, O lady of the sun. I had the tale from one who knows him well.

She was, like him, a child of that tall chief who yearly brings his caravan to Egypt."

Asenath suddenly put her arms around the speaker's dimpled shoulders, holding her surprised a moment ere she lifted the little chin on the point of her rosy finger, and said:

"Sweet are your words, O little singer. You are my mocking-bird, and bring me all the pleasant notes you learn afar. See, here is that scarf of silk you thought so well of. Take it; it is yours. And this long string of pearls, warm from my throat. And here are ruby drops, the color of your lips, to whisper to your little ears how well Asenath loves you."

Impetuously she unclasped the jewels from herself and fastened them upon the delighted Tasu. Then kissed her and pushed her playfully away.

"Run to your mates that preen and show their beauty to the light," she said; and the girl danced to the window and down a flight of steps to the court of peacocks. There she harnessed the majestic birds with white rib-

bons and drove them up and down the paths with much scolding and laughter. Asenath and the older woman—who was her nurse and foster-mother—watched the scene smilingly for a while, and then Orpah said, going to the outer window:

“The governor will ride this way at noon and the hour approaches. The queen desires you to entertain him as one who has the right of royal favor.” She paused and added:

“If I mistake not, she has some plans to speed the wedding of her son to Esau’s daughter.”

“I would that he might bring her home to-day,” replied the girl in a low voice, but with no sign that she had caught the other’s meaning. “Good Orpah, I have never loved the prince, and would not take him for a husband were he thrice the son of Pharaoh.”

The elder woman patted her hand gently.

“What think you of this youth the king has raised to such authority?” she asked; and then seeing the quick blush on Asenath’s cheek, said soothingly: “Nay, I do wrong to

question you. You scarce have seen his face, and Love must take his time for his unveiling."

The girl made no answer; but under her scarf her bosom rose and fell; and the other, from the shadow of transparent silk that she wore in the fashion of elderly women, fastened with a silver band at her brow and hanging to her feet, saw and smiled tenderly. But she said with assumed indifference:

"No doubt the king would like to make a marriage between you and the adon—as though a daughter of Pentephres would wed an Arab! And yet I must confess he is a comely man and gallant as a soldier; and though he may not look so high as Asenath, he yet, mayhap, will find a maiden to his liking here in Egypt."

She turned, as if to change the subject; but her mistress said:

"The adon likes not women. I heard that even Pharaoh had offered him a wife and that he had refused her."

"Then he had seen her not!" Orpah

sprang to her feet and threw back her veil with a gesture of sudden anger. But seeing the girl's surprised and questioning looks, struggled to regain composure—an effort in which she had but indifferent success—as she continued falteringly:

“I meant to say no man could look on Mizraim's fair daughters and keep his heart untroubled.”

Asenath went close and looked into her face.

“Some other meaning was hidden in your words, O mother,” she whispered. “And now is my soul faint with shame. Deny it not, for I, Asenath, was the woman proffered and disdained. O take your arms away! I cannot bear the loving pity of their touch in such a time as this.”

She covered her face, and her slight form trembled for a moment's space. Then she burst forth like a tempest:

“If this be true, O Orpah, I will go up to Pharaoh's throne and rage against him for this insolence. Am I slave that I may be of-

ferred as a prize to any stranger, and be by him at pleasure taken or scorned? Be not deceived, I'll meet the king; and more, I will see this Arab, and if there is a woman's wit and cunning in my bosom I'll make him love me. Then, when he has come with greater eloquence than he had for Pharaoh for favor in my sight, I will scorn him and drive him forth with laughter. You will laugh, Orpah, will you not? And little Tasu, and all, when he goes away sorrowful? And I shall laugh and be merry, even if I——" She stopped, weeping, and running across the room flung herself face downward on a couch of pillows; and Orpah caught from there the muffled end of all her threatenings—"even if I die!"

Orpah, the wise, said no word. But she went over and loosed the net of pearls from the young girl's splendid hair and set it drifting in midnight softness as far as the little pink heels revealed above the jewelled crossings of the sandals. With every restless movement of the tiny feet the ankle bells sent out a tuneful murmuring. But the old nurse

brushed in silence until the loosened locks shone in splendor, then she went and fetched a jewel case, and selecting a circlet from which alternate strands of pearls and diamonds depended, set it on the girl's head and threaded the dazzling strings of precious stones among the strands of hair.

"Come, heart of my life, smile on your old Orpah!" she coaxed when the adornment was complete. And with her sobs dying away the girl arose and submitted to the process of tiring. Orpah unclasped her lady's tunic at the shoulders and it fell shimmering around her feet, leaving her clad only in a diaphanous under-robe that half revealed and half concealed the lithe young beauty of her form. Then smiling through her tears with the unconscious joy a woman feels in being newly dressed, Asenath stood among the billows while her woman brought another robe from an adjoining chamber and clasped it at the white shoulders and under the girlish breasts with ropes of pearls.

She had scarcely finished her task when

there was a sound of wheels on the rush-strewn street and the sudden blare of trumpets proclaiming the arrival of the young governor.

"Come, beloved, let us see him when he rides toward your gates," said Orpah. But Asenath answered:

"Do you go, O mother. I care not to see him come."

But by the time the nurse had reached the window, close beside her in the very shelter of her drapery pressed the girl. And the old woman felt a young heart beating against her arm as a bird beats against its bars.

There was a holiday throng in the street—people in gay costumes and humor moving back and forth with waving branches in their hands and cheers waiting but the time to issue from their throats. Then forth from the Avenue of Sphinxes, which was one of the noted achievements of Apepi, issued the chariots; and in the foremost, like a strong young god, splendid in his majesty, rode the dreamer of Israel and archer of the desert,

now known as Zaphnath, the governor. At sight of him the cheers found vent, and little children ran to scatter flowers in the path of his horses.

He had been willing to be a slave that he might learn the art of mastery. And he had learned it well. From the hour that he had gained authority from Pharaoh he had been intent upon his plans for saving Egypt, and now that the storehouses were ready and the land was in its second year of bountiful harvests, he was going personally through all the farming country, not only buying up grain and contracting for that unplanted, but exacting one-fifth of what was harvested for storage in the royal granaries. The work had not been done without a protest from the people, to whom the tax seemed a burden unjust and tyrannical. But when they learned the story of the great king's dream and its interpretation by the officer who had been commissioned to guard the land from famine, they submitted to the tax and co-operated with him by transporting the required por-

tion of their grain from the threshing-floors to the nearest cities for storage. And so it was the young man who had been made by so strange a fate second only to Pharaoh in Egypt now rode between walls of acclaim as he entered the city of the sun and made his way toward the house of the High Priest, where he had been given to expect he would have entertainment. He had not been wholly ignorant of the king's plans concerning him; but he had received a hint of them with so little favor that Apepi was both angry and astonished.

"I will take no wife," he said, with the same lack of tact that had characterized his boyhood. But the tears filled his eyes as he thought of Louimma smiling among her lilies in the tents of Kedar. It was a boy's love that he had given her; but as yet he did not know how much it differed from a man's deep passion. And the king, seeing some emotion filled his soul, said nothing more to him concerning women. But now, as he stood straight and tall in his golden car, his charioteer whispered:

“Here on the right is the house of Pentephres, O adon. And here lives the fairest maid of Egypt.”

“Peace!” replied the governor, with some lack of patience. “Lovely or not, I like not the Egyptian women.”

And as he spoke his glance and his words were borne up to the eyes and the ears of Asenath.

Startled and all amazed at her great beauty, he halted; and her eyes drank his as the sun drinks up blue pools. Then he sprang from the car and strode to the door. But once he had passed the double lines of bowing slaves within the corridor, and led by a fountain’s splashing, had found the inner court, Orpah met him with many expressions of welcome, which could not wholly conceal her real confusion and distress.

“Peace, and your heart’s desire to you, O Zaphnath Paaneah, keeper of Mizraim!” she said. “Enter and take the bread and the blessings of this house.”

“I would see the Lady Asenath, good

woman," replied the visitor, acknowledging her courtesy with a gesture. "Was it not she who stood but now within the window?"

He spoke with eager impatience. But the woman hesitated, tried again to speak, and then looked at him in helpless lack of words. A moment he stood bewildered, then questioned:

"She will not see me?" And waited, surprised at his sharp hurt.

Orpah moved her hands nervously.

"You have spoken," she answered. "Her little heart is in a suit of pride against such arrows as you shot toward her window. But stay, I pray you, and break her father's bread. He is away on priestly business, not knowing of your coming."

"I thank you," he responded. "But first must I make peace, if may be, with your lady."

He left the house, gloomy with self-reproach, and mounted his chariot sadly.

"Hail, adon! Hail, Zaphnath Paaneah!" shouted the people, waving their palm branches in front of him. But his face was

stern, and he looked as though he had not heard them. While behind her curtain-folds of many-colored silk Asenath wept to see him ride away.

That night he walked beside the Nile alone. And as the river ran and thrilled the land with life, so through his pulses leaped the tide of love. It had come to him as a tempest. The ragings of the storm were in his breast; the sweet fires of the lightnings filled his veins. Shock after shock swept over him and left him trembling. He saw her lovely, languorous face in every star, and covering his eyes he sank to press his breast against the warm brown earth. And as the fertile river whispered on its way, so murmured, yearningly, the young blood of the man.

But in the High Priest's house at Heliopolis, Asenath sat alone in her chamber, built over the temple gate, and the moon shone on a face as cold and still as some carved marble image on her altar, save when the scarlet mouth trembled in wounded pride.

At dawn a messenger waited at the portal

of her house, and Orpah took his words to her young mistress.

“The governor has sent his morning greetings, and begs for his heart’s peace to have some speech with you,” she said. “Dear child, with some soft word reply.”

But Asenath answered:

“Say to the adon: The Egyptian women like not strangers.” And more she would not say.

When it was broad day another envoy knocked. He bore a basket of rarest flowers; but the lady sent them back without a message. At noon another came, and so throughout the day without reward.

But when evening came Asenath wandered in the gardens with her maidens, and while they stood beside the sacred lake, within the fragrant circle of the lotus flowers, and gossiped like any other group of girls, her heart was listening through the dusk, and after a time it heard him coming from afar.

“Dear Orpah,” she said, “remain, I pray, no longer in the dew, lest you and all these

tender friends may take some sickness of the night. Hear me, and go."

"I fear no evil, O sweet lady of the sun," called Tasu stoutly. "I will stay here with you."

But as they all began to make their protests against going, Orpah, the wise, spreading her mantle wide, cried:

"In, chatterers, in!" And gathering them in front of her she drove them as a great white hen drives a flock of chicks, chirping and twittering and scurrying along the paths and up to the house; stopping not until the portals of fine brass which hung upon the door-posts of carved ivory had yawned and closed upon them.

Asenath leaned against the fountain's rim. She knew not why she stayed; she even tried to coax her anger to her mind that she might find excuse for seeing him—to school her quivering lips to speak her scorn. But when she heard his step upon the path her heart beat to its measure. The pebbles laughed beneath his eager feet and her veins trilled

with unheard laughter. Close by her side a nightingale sang; her sea-green eyes grew timid in the light and hid their softness under veiling lashes.

He came within the near, dark shadow of the palm that sheltered her. But she gave no sign that she had seen him. Then his conquering hand fell on her shoulder.

“I love you!” he whispered hoarsely. “I love you!”

She drew away, but she was trembling. All nature clashed loud cymbals at that touch. Speech fluttered in her throat a prisoner, and after a moment she turned, and with a little cry ran deeper into the fragrant wilderness. Her foot was light, but he followed fast, and far in the dusk of the incense grove he caught her and kissed her and held her.

“I love you!” he murmured again and again, gathering the rose-smiles as they grew upon her lips. “Lift up your eyes, O my beloved, and give your scarlet mouth to my kisses! Let me drink the breath with which you say you love me.”

Her heart beat against his heart, her slender arms wreathed his neck, the fragrant mist of her hair was around him. The earth shook under his feet and the stars sang; and for him there was no thought of Pharaoh or his kingdom, for Egypt was within his arms.

He crushed her against his breast with inarticulate words of love, and she answered with broken murmurs, while her soft lips lingeringly caressed his cheeks. But when her red mouth found the strong white column of his throat, and she had kissed it tremulously, she raised her eyes a moment to his own, then bent again, and where she last had kissed set hard her little teeth. He gave a cry full of the joy of it and the pain of it. And sweeping her from her feet bore her in his arms back toward the garden, her tender form pressed to his side and her long garments trailing about his mighty limbs.

The way was short, but they were not in haste. Her face on his shoulder was lifted to the night; her breath stirred his hair softly. And as he strode through the grove in the

purple darkness he bent to cool his cheeks on the snow of her bosom.

As they returned thus to the garden there was a loud sound as of a company at the gate and a sudden flare of torches, and as Asenath slipped from his arms and stood beside him she restrained his movement to go toward the intruders.

"It is my father with his attendants," she whispered. "I know not what he will say to find me thus companioned with a stranger."

"A stranger? O my love," he answered, drawing her close to him in the shadows, "have you no better name for me than that?"

She lifted his hand, and with infinite love and humility laid it on her breast.

"Yes," she answered softly, as the men with the torches approached near them. "Yes, O yes!"

They stood by the fountain, and the priest had to pass that way as he went to his house. They could see him approach in his white, flowing garments, with his breastplate of gems; and the three snowy plumes of his office

towering above his temples; a dark, haughty man, feared and revered by even Pharaoh. And as he drew near them Asenath called:

“Father!”

Amazed, Pentephres stopped in the path.

“My daughter, here!” he said. Then, as his surprise gave place to sternness, he strode forward, questioning angrily:

“Who keeps this tryst of darkness with you?”

“Her husband, O priest of Heliopolis!” answered a man’s voice, deep with all love’s melody. And as he stepped forward into the light of the lifted torches those who bore them dropped to their knees, crying wonderingly:

“Zaphnath Paaneah!”

For a moment the two men gazed into each other’s eyes. Then the High Priest said coldly:

“I knew not such an honor was upon my house. Let us within and talk the matter over.”

“You have some reason for complaint, O father of my wife,” replied the adon. “But

now let my excuse be made that we may have your blessing. Come, my beloved, and win your father's pardon for me."

He took her hand in his, and the three went into the house together.

Within an hour's time the guard who kept the outer gate was roused by the call of a horseman.

"Open, and let me out!" he cried. "By dawn I must be at the palace of the king. The High Priest bids our lord prince take the bride his heart desires from the hills of Sela. I must make haste. Mentu has waited long!"

The porter swung the gates wide, and the courier galloped through at full speed—the hoof-beats dying slowly on the air in the night stillness of Mizraim.

CHAPTER XXI

Palace and Tent of Stars

IT was the second year of the famine. The failure of the fields had brought hunger and disaster to many, but trade was brisk for Jubal, and his inn—on the desert side of the now thread-like river—was constantly filled by travellers coming and going between the east and Egypt. For the people came up from all the surrounding country to exchange their money for grain; and later, when that had been exhausted, to barter, little by little, the very land that had brought forth the harvests.

Jubal stood at his door when an old man riding a donkey came from the path of the hills up to the stable-yard, and dismounting, began to untie a small napkin which held a handful of grain. The animal watched him with restrained eagerness and turned down one glossy ear for any confidence which might

be tendered by his master concerning the meagre refreshment. Along the way from the east country it had been:

“Eat sparingly, O little brother, for the meal is low; but once in Egypt you may whet your appetite, remembering how we fasted together on the journey.” So had he taken his scant measure without complaint. But here, in the shadow of the land of plenty, he was given a few husks with no excuse to sweeten them. He ground them between his teeth and meditated on the ways of men.

“Ho, Miron!” cried the innkeeper jovially, “the time is ripe for your coming, if all your grain pouches are as low as this one. I hope your money has put forth no sign of wings; for according to Osiris we have yet five years in which to plant golden seeds to raise the crops of Pharaoh.”

The stranger nodded, pouting his full lips.

“I doubt not before ’tis done the king will own the very flesh of Mizraim,” he answered. “It is an unjust law that he has fixed upon us. For seven years I stored a fifth of what

my fields brought forth that when the days of evil came I might have plenty for myself and others. But now, in truth, I have to buy what is my own; and lacking money give my land in payment."

"Patience, good friend," said Jubal, with the tolerance of one who is benefited by the conditions which afflict others, "and consider what a weighty privilege it is to come here and buy when else you must be starving. Which one of you who grumble at the methods of the adon would have husbanded your grain had he not counselled Pharaoh? Now no one starves because he must, but only when he chooses. Moreover, had not the king kindness in his heart to move his capital to Memphis to make the journey easier for all who came from Syria? 'Tis true he knew a worthy man was master of this inn and sought to favor me; for much the governor has told him of my ways, as he and I are old acquaintances."

The innkeeper's chest rose like a pigeon's, and the other old man exclaimed:

“You know the adon? You?”

“Even I, Jubal. But fear not, friend; I still have kindness in my soul for humbler men. The matter was like this: One day a chariot rolled by me in the avenue of obelisks, and I raised my eyes to see a face which vexed me with a memory I could not grasp. At first it seemed that I had met that look in some far vision. But while I gazed with the keen trouble engendered by the sight, the people shouted ‘Zaphnath Paaneah!’ and bowed the knee. But still I stopped and stared, until the great man, looking down, cried out ‘Hail, Jubal!’ as I might cry to you.

“Once in my house, reached, I must grant you, with limbs that trembled with bearing so much honor, I found my tablet-book. And there, as I live, he was shown by the picture-writing I had made when he came into Egypt.”

“They say he is an Arab,” observed the Syrian, sufficiently impressed, while the pink tongue of his beast still searched for grain

dust between the wiry brown fingers of his extended hand. "A son of Aman——"

"They say! They say!" scoffed Jubal excitedly. "And it is true that so the chief himself named him to me. But I have too much knowledge of the tribes to fit a face like his into the desert. If Egypt wants to know her saviour's race, let Egypt come to me; for I tell you, Miron of the plains, the man is a——"

A number of men talking and gesticulating with animation approached, and Jubal, with the instincts of his business, finished hurriedly.

"Another time, O Miron, will I tell you all. Now must I go with greetings to these sons of Jacob."

He turned and joined the group that had just crossed the stream—dark, swarthy men, clad in skins and mounted on horses, and pressed them to stop and partake of his well-taxed hospitality. The oldest of the number—a man of noble presence—dismounted, and the others followed his example. And as they

went within the vaulted room between the columns of painted granite and sat to eat the fare provided for them, Jubal said:

“Why do you set your faces toward the wilderness when Egypt wears robes of festival? Think you the sheep that wait upon your hills can sing as sweetly as the dancing maidens? Hark how the very stones of Memphis clap their hands for the young governor!”

A sound of cheering and applause came to their ears from the city, and Reuben answered:

“When we arose at sunrise every wall was hung with garlands, and the highway of the kings was paved with dew-wet blooms. We heard the little singers in the temple lift a hymn of praise to this one man, and saw them dance as flowers do at morning in the meadows.”

“It is the same each year. The king delights to honor him,” answered Jubal; and with pursed lips added: “And I must give approval to his plan.”

“You, in good truth!” laughed one of the

travellers in derision. "I trust the Pharaoh knows that Jubal of the inn is pleased with his endeavors." The others joined in the roar of laughter which followed; and the old man flung his arms and tried to make them hear above the tumult what claim he had to kingly favor. But before he had succeeded in his attempt Judah's voice rose above the laughter:

"We have not made you answer to your question, O Jubal," he said. "We are returning at the desire of the governor, who bade us lose no time in taking our full sacks back to the hungry ones in Canaan. But that we might not by our haste lose all the joys of the festival, he made a feast for us, alone, within the palace banquet hall last night."

"A feast for you? You?" The old man's voice rose shrilly in his surprise. And Miron, the Syrian, exclaimed:

"And sat he, the Egyptian, with you?" Jubal was rocking his head in his hands and did not heed the question. But Reuben answered:

“Even so. And he, himself, served us from dishes of gold and silver; and although every man had enough, our youngest brother’s plate was heaped with the choicest food and set in garlands. To me he gave the first of everything, and each was served according to his years.”

“What knew he of your years?” questioned Jubal sourly. “This is a different tale than filled your mouths when last I talked with you.”

“It is but just, O Jubal,” answered Reuben gravely, “that we should tell you something of this visit we have made to Egypt, since in your ears we poured complaints against the governor, whose manner, when we made our former expedition, troubled us. You know he met us with dark looks and asked us all concerning Jacob and ourselves, and questioned with strange interest of our number. And when we told him that we had a younger brother, the apple of our father’s eye, he ordered us to bring him into Egypt. We told you something of the case returning hither.”

“I remember well,” replied Jubal. “Albeit at the time I had most weighty matters on my mind to entertain the hosts that came to pay their homage to Prince Mentu’s first-born son. I doubt if ever Egypt heard such great rejoicings. He is a fine lad now; one may see him any day holding in his little hands the ribbons of a battle-car that Captain Potiphar drives down the way of obelisks. His hair is like his mother’s, and that no doubt is pleasing to the Sun, who shows much favor to the red-haired dwellers of the eastern hills. But do you go on.”

“There is naught else to say. The wrongs of yesterday are ever lost in a new hour’s benefits.”

Reuben turned away and went out to see to the needs of the horses, and the youngest among the brothers said:

“I would that we had stayed a little longer. There are to be games, and a company of dwarfs will fight and jest in the square that fronts the palace. Jova, the great armed guard, will try his strength against a river

horse at sunset, and there will be singing bands to carry torches through the streets. I would that we had stayed a little longer!"

"The adon seemed in haste that we should go," remarked Judah thoughtfully. "He seems a man of many whims and fancies. At first he called us spies and kept us in his land perforce, and now that we would stay to join his praises he pays us honors, but hastens our departure."

Dan left the table where the others still sat, and added:

"I think the moon has won his reason. I saw him looking in the face of Benjamin through tears. Is it his custom, think you, so to honor shepherds?"

"I know not," replied Benjamin; "but it was pleasant. The news will please our father. I care not how the matter came about."

And now the men came out one after another and began preparations for departure. Miron, the Syrian, who had been in conversation with Reuben beside the well in the

stable-yard, made his farewells to Jubal and the brothers and started toward the river, leading his donkey by the bridle. But once upon the bank he paused by the low stream, and then came running back, with robes lifted for his swifter progress.

“A company of soldiers come!” he called breathlessly. “Soldiers of the king!”

The men at the well turned curious faces toward the troop, which was in full sight and making all haste toward where they stood, and the hearts of the younger ones among the sons of Jacob leaped at the dashing line of armed and helmeted warriors who rode their splendid horses across the shallow bed of the Nile. The shepherds in their leopard-skins were in strong contrast to the Egyptians; and they watched them with keen interest as they drew near.

The trained chargers climbed the bank gallantly and galloped toward the little group of men who held their places by the well. Then the trooper in command halted and spoke to Reuben:

“We seek the Hebrew shepherds who to-day bought corn in Memphis.” And Reuben answered:

“Here are we. What is your will concerning us?”

Bewildered, the brothers looked upon each other and the troops, and the officer said curtly:

“Zaphnath Paaneah, adon of Egypt, will make that plain to you when he has found the cup which you have stolen from him. Make haste and mount. His anger will not wait.”

Judah stepped forward; the veins on his forehead knotted like ropes and his great hands trembled.

“Insulter!” he cried. “Take back your words, nor dare to call the sons of Jacob thieves.” But Reuben came forward and laid a hand on him, saying:

“Peace, there is some mistake. Let us go at once, even as he has said. I dread no eyes when I am innocent.”

He spoke with grave dignity to the man,

going close and laying his hand upon his horse's mane; and the officer, seeing his attitude, answered his questions courteously. It seemed the adon had missed the drinking vessel directly after the feast which he had given to the Israelites, and had at once accused them, in hot anger, of taking it. "He prized not the cup," explained the officer, "so much as he condemned the black ingratitude of those he honored with his favor."

"We will return," said Judah, "if but to shame him for the wrong he does us. You see, our sacks are as we brought them out, with Pharaoh's seal upon the mouth of every one. These mouths shall tell our innocence."

"Said I not that he is mad?" said Dan to Benjamin. "Perhaps 'tis best to humor him."

Levi, Naphtali, and Simeon were filled with rage, and it took all the calm reasoning of the others to make them submit peaceably to the arrest. But after a short space of time they were all mounted, and with their grain over their saddles making their way back over the

road they had travelled so joyously in the morning. Miron, the Syrian, and the inn-keeper following excitedly after.

The streets of Memphis were gay with decorations in honor of the ninth year of the governor, and the white walls of the city had been newly painted with scenes of his journeys through the land gathering sheaves of grain and heading triumphal processions of harvesters. Here and there the artists had shown him in his battle-car; or directing the movements of a fleet of ships; and sometimes he was mildly caricatured as a grasshopper devouring the fields; or flattered in the likeness of a jackal with the sceptre of authority. And on one lofty monument was the record of a youth slaying a lion with an arrow.

Throngs in gala dress and humor passed the Hebrews, who were hurried between their guards to the door of the adon's house. But even as they waited for an audience in the great hall, a woman, slender and young, was swinging against the governor's breast, making a petition for them.

“Be not so hard,” she said, with tears in her great eyes. “Why are you through so slight a thing so grievously offended? My heart went out to that young shepherd; and I deemed that you had in your voice, when you spoke to him, something of that same tenderness you keep for the two boys who call you father. Dear love, be not so hard.”

Her lips were scarlet, and he laid his own upon them. But he looked at all her tender beauty through his tears. “Stay near me, O my wife,” he said with emotion. “I cannot tell you what is in my heart, but be sure that it has naught of anger. Come to the hall.”

He put his arm around Asenath’s waist and held her little jewelled hand against his breast. And so the shepherds saw them, as they entered together.

Once there, the woman put her lips close to the governor’s ear for a moment, but they did not hear her whisper her sweet pity. They waited with stern, white looks the face of their accuser, and their sacks lay on the marble floor, each at its owner’s feet.

The governor stepped forward. He was dressed in a mantle of white, lustrous silk over a close-fitting tunic, richly embroidered in many colors. A chain of precious stones hung on his breast, and his arms and ankles were clasped with heavy bands of gold. As he left the side of his wife, he threw up his right arm with his mantle upon it and covered his face from the shepherds, and thus stood silently before them.

The soldiers, at a motion from their leader, knelt down and opened the sacks; and suddenly a boyish cry sounded through the lofty room:

"It is not true! It is not true! I did not take the cup."

"I found it in your sack, boy," answered the soldier sternly, holding aloft the silver vessel, and Benjamin ran across with a sobbing cry and threw himself at the adon's feet. The breast of the governor heaved convulsively, and he bent quickly over the prostrate form, only to straighten and stand as before, as though waiting for something. Asenath,

moved by some unguessed emotion, drew near to his side and touched his arm with a caressing hand. Then there was a movement among the shepherds, and Judah walked forward out of the group. His face was pale and drawn, and he spoke in a voice broken by emotion:

“In the black tents of Hebron, O adon of Egypt, an old man sits alone. This boy was named Benoni by his mother’s dying lips, and he is all that Jacob has to speak to him of Rachel.”

He paused, great tears falling down his cheeks, and the others flung themselves upon the floor, covering their faces, as he continued: “You know, O prince, by that strange magic which you use to read all hearts, that we and this young lad are innocent of what has here been charged against us. But we are guilty men”—hoarse cries came from the others as he spoke—“and for the wrongs of other days there must be made a recompense.” He advanced toward the governor with arms outstretched. “Take

my life, O Egypt, and let the boy haste to the empty arms of Jacob!"

Soldiers and a few members of the vice-regal household had crowded into the place, but every man stood motionless. Then the governor, suddenly uncovering his face, swept out his hands in a gesture of dismissal, and they went out wondering at his looks.

For a moment there was silence in the great hall save for the heavy, muffled sobs of men. But unable longer to control himself, the adon stooped low and raised Benjamin to his breast. Then, with a cry so full of love and tenderness that the shepherds heard amazed and struggled to their feet, he stretched his arms toward them and said:

"Do you not know me? Look at me! Come to me! It is I—Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt!"

Tears rained from his eyes; but terrified and dismayed, the skin-clad shepherds huddled away from him toward the wall; only Benjamin, the blameless, staying beside him. But he followed them saying:

“Look not so strangely on me, for my heart has only love for you. Reuben, touch my hand. Judah, you paid your debt but now, when you made intercession for Benoni. Look up, O sons of Jacob, and give me tidings of our father.”

They came forward hesitatingly, and would have knelt had not Joseph clasped them in his arms. Then Reuben said tremblingly:

“Let us go hence, O brother, for a little while. Our hearts are faint beneath your great forgiveness. After a time we will return. Now must we weep alone.”

He gave consent, and they left the hall in company, silent, and as men might walk in dreams. But Benjamin smiled back as he reached the door.

Then Joseph returned between the fluted columns to where his wife stood by the table of parchments. They were alone; and he threw himself on a couch wearily, and she bent without speech and kissed his eyes.

Only to her had he told the visions of the fields; and now they were fulfilled. But she

had not known his brothers until that moment of revelation.

“O love,” she said at last, leaning her cheek against the richly-embroidered garment on his breast, “I think of that other many-colored coat, and of the boy who wore it to his sorrow! Why gave you these hard men tears for their punishment?”

There was wonder in her tones and some resentment. But he answered:

“Through their rough hands I came to rescue Egypt. But, O my wife, that is not all! I must make recompense to them for each sweet kiss and every dear embrace that you have given me. But tell me. Has your pride some little hurt remembering that I am a shepherd?”

He rose as he spoke, and she, slipping to her knees, raised the hem of his mantle to her lips and answered:

“You are my lord, my king, and husband!”

And he bent and lifted her and held her to his breast.

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